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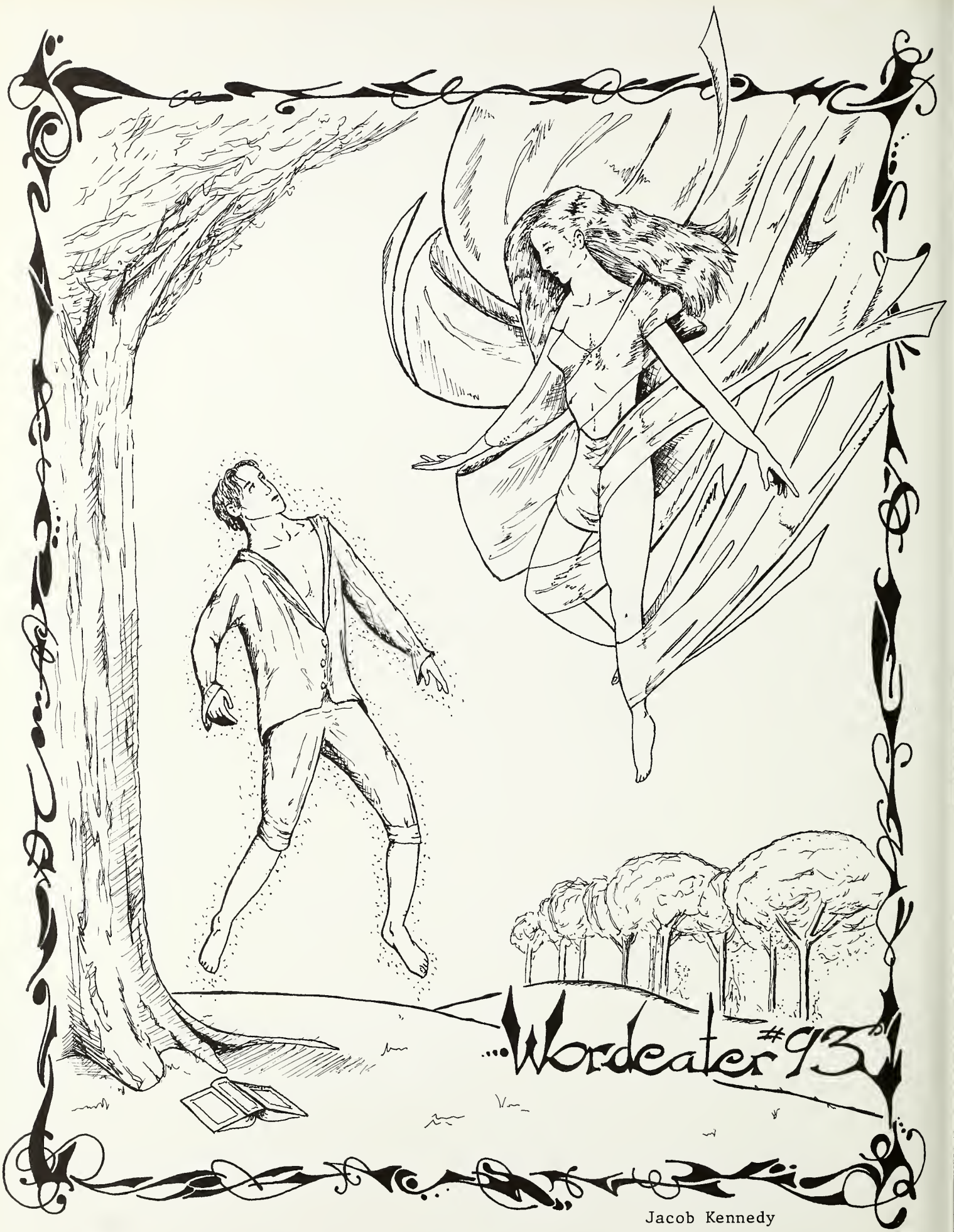

Jacob Kennedy

Old Woman
Michelle Bergeron-Yurgin

I saw the old woman
Whose face was covered with age
I saw the old woman
I looked down at the page

I saw the old woman
I began to cry
I say the old woman
I could not deny

I saw the reflection
The mirror told the truth
The old woman is me
Gone is my youth

Are You Listening
Michelle Bergeron-Yurgin

Are you listening, do you know who I am?
How do you feel about me, should I be damned?

Are you listening, when I cry my tears?
Can you feel inside my many fears?

Are you listening, do you hate me for what I have done?
Are you a daughter or are you a son?

Are you listening, please understand
I was so young, no one to take my hand

Are you listening. I had a decision to make
My life or your life, whose should I take

Are you listening, when I say I was afraid
It was a problem that we had made

Are you listening, I never let your life begin
To hell, to hell with my mortal sin

Are you listening, as I beg for your love
As I pray to the God above

Are you listening, my lost little baby
In your little heart, can you forgive me?

Seasons
Michelle Bergeron-Yurgin

Summer grows weary in September each year
And Autumn informs her that Winter is near

So she strips off her green flowered gown
And puts on pajamas of gold, red and brown

She crawls into bed under a blanket of snow
And tucks in ever, corner and crevice just so.

She sleeps to sounds of Christmas bells ringing
And wakes to the alarm of Spring birds singing

She bathes herself in the cool April showers
And dresses again in green grass and flowers

Starved Worms
John Bloome

Hypnotized by you Queen Lullaby
As spring paints orgasm on the dying sky.
Etherized by your hollow love song
As my cancer defeats your knife.

Paralyzed by master's sensual touch
As melting former friends fail to feed
Simplified lovers' demands.

Lovers reunite with benign obstruction
As religions converge.

Carrion
Judy Bond

I am bone white
desert dessert left behind for scavengers licking-
Unable to feed myself,
I am feed for others.
Dry insects with snapcracker crusts

crawl along the seam of me,
flat-felled seams inside out,
agape with the rotting thread of time.

Seems to me
somehow sublimely
irresponsible!
I do not
can not
do not need to
care.
I am carelessly free
of obligation,
obliged to lie still in the still chill
of my bones
bleached by the God's eye.

Ladies Man
Heather Baron

Looking for: SWF for my DWM father. Must be between the ages of 30 and 40. Send a picture; he likes them thin and attractive. Possible long term relationship if found worthy. Decorating experience helpful; this bachelor pad needs help. You'll need to be financially stable, I don't need you to spend my college money. Must answer to "bitch", or "women". Please no Jehovah Witnesses or Satan worshipers. Must like bluegrass and country music. Experience with banjo playing a plus. Must specialize in cooking Mexican food. Must like old cards and playing pool. Must be healthy; if we like you we might keep you for a while. And no drag queens please. (No offense, it just didn't work out the last time for him.) Must speak English. Last but not least, must be nothing like my mother.

Hopeful Glances
Heather Baron

As I walk away from you
I glance back
Hoping you'll run after me
And make me stop
But you don't bother
You know I'll return
I always do

Voice
Heather Baron

I look at you
And feel a million emotions
That I can't put into words
So I stay silent
Trapped in a world of unspoken thoughts
And as I listen to you voice your feelings
I hate every word you say
And envy your ability to speak

Fear
Heather Baron

If I should start to cry
Hold me
And tell me I am loved
For I cry not out of sadness
But of the fear
Of losing you

I Know the Mirrors
Shayla Boetto

I know the mirrors that are my friends,
the ones in semi-darkness that hide,
the scowl-marks between my eyes,
or the ones with the correct distance
to fade the wideness of my hips.
I grope for a solution
to never looking again
I guess my angles look better.

I Desire One More...
Shayla Boetto

The doorbell rang, I welcomed him in.
We said our "hello's", and he walked into

my kitchen.
He smiled at me, I was melting, then he
planted his kiss.
The feel of his lips on mine, lit me on fire.
My tongue and his tongue dueled an
unknown battle,
How could this be happening to me.
Could I explode on the spot?

I think it is possible to explode.
My knees are weak, and I am on fire.
Oh my god, what is happening to me?
Those kisses just kept coming one after
another.
Please.. STOP!!! I shouted and
backed away
I ran my hand through my hair,
My heart said YES, why not, one more kiss

Forbidden Lover

Shayla Boetto

The forbidden lover beckons, I refuse
to follow until nightfall is full and
all eyes are turned aside.

In daylight we pass each other coldly,
as if we hardly know one another. We
wear dark glasses. We speak in riddles,
our words are cold in casual conversations.
The look of your eyes the smile on my face
are a thousand words spoken.

Hidden away in parking lots and dark
barrooms, nurtured on subterfuge our
love grows deformed. Planes orchestrated in
hushed phone calls miscommunicate.
We grow distrustful, we grow wary.

Hook Tank

Shyla Boetto

God, what were we doing? My blood pressure was going through the roof. Marcy and I were both sweating. Between the blaring head banger crap and my fears, I was starting to chicken out. I told Marcy, that I could really go for a smoke. What if it hurt? Ahhhh, we were getting tattoos! My mind was racing, is this what happens when you turn thirty, or is it part of my youth that I cannot quite give up? What was Marcy going to say? I decided that would not really be a problem. My mother on the other hand, now that is a different issue.

Since Hook was doing my tattoo, I went first. He asked me to sit in his chair, As I walked over, my hands were shaking. The chair resembled an old barber's chair. It had a metal foot rest. I started to take my shoe and sock off; of course with all my nervousness, my foot was sweaty. I was praying for no foot odor. What would this guy think if I had foot odor. It was not as if we would be hanging out together. What on earth was I worrying about. Hook started his whole routine, by putting on plastic gloves. He pulled out all the instruments needed for this procedure.

This actually looked official. The only difference was, that Hook was a tattoo artist. He was sitting there with a Harley Davidson tee-shirt on, and tattoos all over his arms and neck. He looked scary at first, but actually he spoke nicely and with a calm voice. He said, "first-timers are always nervous."

The floor-rest made my foot very cold. Hook sensed that I would be more at ease, if I rested my foot on his knee. As he was cleaning the area around my toe, I looked at Marcy. She smiled at me, and told me everything would be OK. He applied the design onto my toe. The color of the potential tattoo resembled a mimeograph design. Hook asked me what colors I wanted I thought about it, and he started to fill in the tiny containers with pain. Good lord, he was going to color my toe and it was more then nail polish. Yikes...

Hook went on to tell me, that he had been in the Army stationed in Hawaii. He sang in the military, even performed for a President. This guy sang for a President, and he was putting a tattoo on my toe. Unbelievable! It make my average day more of an adventure.

It stung when he was outlining the design. During this time they were are going the deepest into your skin. It really felt like I was continually being scratched. I sat very still. God I did not want to pass out. Hook could not believe how still I could sit. Every once in awhile my toe would flinch.

"Whoa, this hurts, when are you going to be done?" I said. "Hold on, Honey." Hook said. He tried to keep me calm.

During all this, Marcy was starting to get her tattoo. Tank helped her design exactly what she wanted. I could not see Tank from where I was sitting. When Tank started to apply the outline, I could hear Marcy's squeal of pain, but I was too concerned with my own pain to worry about her. When I was done, Hook marveled at his work. Everyone in the shop looked at it. Something new, I guess. My toe felt like it was on fire. Kind of a dull throbbing sensation.

I hobbled over to Marcy, to see how she was getting along. She was in excruciating pain. It seemed kind of peculiar, since I had been the one who seemed the most scared. Here she was squeezing both of my hands, and I had survived without her help. During that time, I sat down and took off my shoe. My toe was still throbbing.

I was surprised at the way Tank looked. Actually, he resembled his name. Squatty and fat. He was balding, but had shoulder length blond hair, and a full beard. Tank also had several tattoos on his arms. He also had each ear pierced five or six times, and had a nose ring. He looked so weird that I felt the urge to lead him around with it. I asked him if he had any other body piercing. He said his nose was enough. Tank was a nice enough guy. Tank said over and over that I had a very nice smile. He thought I should leave my husband and run away with him. Yeah right! He still partied a lot and seemed very absorbed in our bodies.

Marcy's tattoo took a long time. Tank had to take several breaks, so that Marcy would not pass out. There were also times when he stopped, because her leg was cramping up. Numerous times, Marcy had no color. Actually she was a pale shade of green.

When she was done, her ankle was all swollen. They wrapped her tattoo so it would not get infected. It was very bloody and oozing down her leg. I was glad that I had none of that pain. Marcy endured close to two hours of pain. This was supposed to be a fun event.

We thanked them for what they had done. It seemed strange to pay for pain. Tank told us that people came in all the time, just for the pain. Is this how we really wanted to spend our Saturday afternoon? When we walked out, Marcy stated that she needed a drink. The pain was so unbearable for her. We went to Shooter's for a couple of drinks. We sat in the tavern and laughed and laughed. God, what had we done. What would everyone say? Especially my mother. On that thought, we broke down laughing more. She was part of all our jokes.

Untitled #1

J. Cavallero

Once my heart pounded
Once it sat silent
Bleeding
throughout its entire existence
moving my body
touching my spirit
definitely feeling my soul

To touch life inside of life
to breathe inside of another breath
feeling beyond the skin
breaking into the blood stream
to crack the skull
and feel the brain pulse

The ritual beating of the drums
are the ritual beating of my heart
my soul

Untitled #2

J. Cavallero

The bitter sweet memories
of the pain, adopted pleasure
and gentle sounds of insecurity

Each day dripping away the salty tears
of a leaky sink

A cold foot is the tingling surprise
that we can feel, and that we are still alive

So rivers grow wider and oak tress grow
stronger

We grow up, and then we become smaller

Our memories, our history, our love, and our understanding

But with the lack of understanding, we stumble upon
A known situation
Situation after situation until...
it all compiles its self into
a whole day. Which then becomes
a page in the book of
Poor Richard's Almanac -
poor poor Richard.

The Eye Of The Storm

Jennifer Chubb

You stand there a pillar of oddity
desiring nothing but awkward glances
to make you feel complete...
Attempting to draw me into your
abstractions--
I can't breathe for you anymore.
You knaw me down to build up your
character...
The flame of fascination lingers
through most of the storm, but
drownd out in the rough waters...
Body and soul wrapped around your finger
Breaking it for the sanity of all
You label it selfish--
I suppose you would know...

Fading Dawn

Jennifer Chubb

Abiding by destiny's direction
The dawn of virtual reality hastens the beat
of a restless heart
Time is the image of eternity
Time is the soul of the world
Ardent desire turns to fear of the unavoidable
The most delicate and precious of the flowers fade
The long awaited glory nothing more then a fictitious
dream turned sour
Unsure of the daylight hours I turn to
unconscious
dreams
You love to be loved
People crawl all over you
Longing to be needed, not passing desire

Wings of Venus

Jennifer Chubb

Pardon my warped sensibilities
and I will forgive your lustful stares
Tell me of your hopes and dreams
and not of your fantasies
Listen with open ears and arms
do not search for me with your hands
your fulfillment will only be brief
Do not seek me as a source for inspiration
take a cosmic journey to Venus on my wings
But remember to land, both feet on the
ground
I can't always catch you

Lunar Seduction

Jennifer Chubb

Submission of the senses for some insight or direction
At the moment of the sun's unveiling to the moonlight
Twilight gazes at dusk
Repression by the clouds
To expose a golden yellow abyss
The moon seduces the sun to outstretch its rays
Where were you when the stars were aglow
in the sky?
Casting reflections upon your imaginary sea of tranquillity

Completion

Jennifer Chubb

Take me away...revive me
comfort me with your silence
direct me with your eyes
abandon your restlessness... awaken your soul
dance in the meadows with the angels of grace
lie in my arms
feel my breath as it draws in from yours

Eternal Flight

Jennifer Chubb

The butterfly flutters its wings in ecstasy
Life is a dream.. death a sigh
Perpetrators of stillness could never
understand
desiring nothing more than
delicate wings and flight
flying into oblivion
never looking back
focusing on the pale faces of the angels
above
waiting to embrace them ...eternally

Odyssey

Jennifer Chubb

The angels on the wall watch as I dream....
invigorating emotions
channel messages to you...
Frightened to be together...
Frightened to be alone
Such great emotional capacity
not sure which way to turn
drawn to you like no other before
this euphoria awakens complex sensations
I know where this is leading
will you follow?

Birth of Flight

Jennifer Chubb

Accentuated rhythms play in my head
pulsating echoes return to my mind
I see the night from a distance
beckoning for it to carry me away
the compassionate universe
embraces me with its philosophies
silently continuing to ponder life
pursuing imagines inspirations
is like chasing a hawk in flight
where does it all start?
where does it all end?
Take me as I am
I won't create an image to suffice others
needs
do you do the same or
will you chase misguided clairvoyants of
society
is it a mirage?
The sun's rays kiss raindrops
to create a mirage...
I dream of these rainbows
shooting from your finger tips
It doesn't seem so unbelievable anymore...
does it?

Full Circle

Jennifer Chubb

Censored messages of immobility
Dreamt realism under a canvas of diverse
colors
You could be so noble
daylight tingling
shivers of sheer fascination with the
inevitable
not destiny
read my palms.. our lines connect
twist of fate.. lines on our palms
radiating lights embellish the empty corner of
the evening
familiar closeness
frightened feelings that might surface...
that already have come to life
That four letter word taunts me endlessly
I said it out loud once
desiring to discover that exact moment when
it all seems to fit together so perfectly
The snow, the stars, everything brings him to
my mind
A constant smile draped across my face
desiring nothing more than for him
to read the thoughts unable to conceal
focus on the butterflies in your mind
there was a brief streak across the night sky
and there you were

The Embrace

Jennifer Chubb

Trying to understand the deeper meaning
while running my fingers through your hair
fascinated just by your presence...
Apologizing for feelings that seem
impossible to possess
in this brief earthly existence
hold me in your heart
hold me in your soul
hold me in your arms

Insecure

Mark Davenport

Mine is a rambling tongue
Of Incoherence-
mumbling,
stuttering...

Somewhere within is a voice
Loud and clear,
that all can hear.

I want to stand upon a pedestal
And say silly things.

Shackles of silence
Binding quiet..
what to say?
something,
Anything.

I am a man of words
Or a boy of letters,
With ballpoint lips
And a felt-tip tongue.

At an apparent,
The dark mist of smoke
Hangs over the air.
Voices speak all at once
I hear everything,
Understand nothing,
And nod my head in assent
So I won't feel alone.

I'm trying to talk-
Really.

The Insecure Weed That May Be A Flower

Mark Davenport

I need to be alone
Tonight.
The moon is calling,
Streaming snowy light-
But now I'm lost;
Am I everywhere, or nowhere at all?
My feet are moving...
That's the important thing.
My mind is moving
through this tangled dream.

Someone said that when you're awake
It's your sleeping soul dreaming-
Like you're living two lives at once.

Someone else said that maybe
The whole universe
Is just a weed in a cosmic vacant lot...

"Hey, it's a nice universe-
I think it's a flower
In a cosmic vacant lot."

"No, a weed"

"Probably. But it was a flower once,
I'm sure
Maybe we can pull that weed
By the root
and place a flower in its place."

Utopia

Mark Davenport

We could make a whole new universe-
A brightly shiny universe-
And call it
Utopia
Because everyone there would be nice.

"What do people do in Utopia?"

"They probably just smoke pot
And talk in a circle."

"Isn't Utopia some kind of place?"
"Just where everyone is nice."

"So this place right here is Utopia?"
"It seems that way..."

The Battle-Cry of a Disgruntled College Youth...

Mark Davenport

Someday I'll be happy;
Someday I'll be free.
But not today.

I am a prisoner of
Monotone,
A soldier of
Routine.

I awake in the morning
Because I always have.
I go to school in the day
Because I always have.

I want to be
Spontaneous,
And unpredictable.

I want to do things
Because I want to.

Sitting in a classroom,
I'd rather be somewhere else.
Sitting at home,
I'd rather be outside.
Sitting with my friends,
I'd rather be alone.

I want to walk in the forest
And become lost in the trees.

...Who Looks Far Away...

Mark Davenport

Somewhere up there
Is the Sea of Tranquility-
Sounds like the name of a place
I've been trying to find.

They say there's no water
In the Sea of Tranquility,
but you never know.

Shadows beckon from within the white,
Tempting the eye.
Somewhere up there,
Beyond the scope of sight,

The Sea of Tranquility Awaits

...For Something That May Be Near...

Mark Davenport

"Look at the shadows on the moon!
No, look...
It almost looks like the earth.

"See that curved shadow
In the middle?
Am I just mistaking it for South America?

"And above it...
The United States!

"They've been lying to us
All this time.
That's the earth up there.
We're on the fucking moon
And we don't even know it!
Think about it:
If they can tell us
That Oswald killed Kennedy
And that the square root of negative nine
Is an imaginary three,
Then why can't they tell us
That we're on the earth
When we're really on the moon?"

I guess the Sea of Tranquility
Isn't so far away
After all.

New Years Grief

Brad Dornick

My head was full of the whiskey sours
I probably didn't mean a word I tried to say
I headed out into the darkness waiting for you
I guess the morning got lost along the way

Your eyes shed the stars from the sky when
I told you I was leaving
You prepared your summer songs as a way to say good-bye
Sleep eyes lied when you swore to God a next time
Ain't it hard when you realize you've died

"Auld Lang Syne" gets sung all the time
in case of recurring deja vu
A new year gets left behind or washed away
the year changes day to day and never looks the same.

The land of 10,000 lakes
doused our wild burning fires
and there I stood in a puddle of my own blood
smiling in the melting snowflakes
watching her sparkle and fade

My bandages lie there on your sheets
my blood drains too fast when you leave
flows from your pores - rolls down my cheek
blue in the face from the accusations
crueler than most dreams - lives so cheap
left us both here alone with star-dust stains

Her soul to keep

Brad Dornick

Not another word my dear
Nothing you say now could ever change my mind again
Across the room is the door to your future
and once you've passed through it, it's also where history ends.
Your tears don't affect me
They're just salt and water from you eyes
Your bloody wrists have no meaning
and neither do those hole left in my arms.
Tomorrow your problems will all fade with the dawn
mine will be washed away with another drink
You took my face, I took your life
and somewhere along the line,
we both used each other up

Nova

Brad Dornick

I can't see you through the windshield
The dashboard lights shine bright in my face
Jack Rabbit's Red Cider burns in my throat
The cigarettes leave their stains on my hands
AM radio blears truck driving songs
while the words you said play over in my mind
those deserted roads are as dark as your past
and unfortunately they're all I see ahead
driving East before the sun has risen
no new horizon for me to try and tame
heading back to where I was young.
My parents call it "home"
to me it's just a place to hang my head
losing my thoughts as the motor hums along
you're washed away, mile by mile.

Around the corner

Brad Dornick

Tried to jump off your god damn planet
Like you said I should
your gravitational instincts pulled me back again
like you knew it would

Hey Miss "Come and Go"
Where, where you been now
why do you run and hide
and never seek me out

Cover those eyes
wash off your hands, dear
you want it fast and hard
but never here girl

21 years in the can
9 left to go
1,000 fleeting good-byes
all said in a row

Threw myself into a critical state
and I knew it
I took the moonlight's last precious shines

and God I blew it

Tied myself up in child-like romance
saving face led me back this way
but with Vegas around the corner
I'll take my first steps today

Her to keep

Brad Dornick

They're going to put you away for a while.
Believe me, you're going to be all right
You can let your body and mind rest here
You'll be safe from the outside world.
They're gonna stop those voices
and pretty soon the dreams will go away.
No one will hurt you on the inside.
Everyone wants to help.
Your mother knows all about this place,
she said it would be for the best
I know that "the coats" don't believe in
fairies,
but don't worry about that right now.
If they need to see you
I'm sure they'll come to me
Tomorrow I'll bring you some more clothes,
And your favorite ring.
The police will want to talk to you,
but I'll stay with you the whole time.
I'm sorry I can't sleep in here with you
tonight,
OK, I'll stay awake.
No, I'm not bleeding
that's the blood from your wrists
Don't worry about the stains,
I'm just glad I found you when I did.
Today is Tuesday,
you've been out for three days.
I haven't left your side,
and no one will take me away
Tell the voices that your going to stay here,
that you're not theirs to take.
You just try and rest now,
the voices won't get me.

Streetheart Claire

D. Doogan

Lights on a pole. Conicals to fill the void
Hearts on the street. You can hear their
shuffling beat
But everything put through it paces
deserves at least one chance.
But after that good-bye to romance
Join in the game
Let me in your dark parade
Dreams in the wind
I can see your eyes have sinned
After all these changes
All the crimes we shared
I say good-bye to my Streetheart Claire
Life on a roll
Could never guess how far you'd go
Wine at your knees
Black as night burgundy
all hopes I had
Of your and my affair
I say good-bye my Streetheart Claire

A Dialogue Debating All That Matters in Life or A Tale of 3 Guys Hanging in Hawaii with My Dad

Rob DeFranco

What I've got to do first before we get to all the dialog that's promised in the title is give you a little background on me and my friends who'll be doing the speaking. Now, to begin, I've got to tell a whole lot of details about myself. I hope none of you will think that I'm being too conceited by boring the world with such petty details of my life, like the fact that my dad left me when I was three and I didn't get to see him until that fatal day that I mentioned in the title.

The "3 guys hanging out" are me, my best friend, Marcel, and my other best friend, Aldous. Now me, I'm Rob. Not much of a name, I'm afraid to say. My guys, they's named after such great men as Marcel Proust and Aldous Huxley. Me, I'm just named after my grandfather. Not to say that my grampa wasn't a great man, it's just he wasn't one of my heroes. He doesn't count for a hero since he was a weak man who killed himself.

I loved the guy a lot, but he just never wrote anything that I was impressed with. My love for him comes from the old pictures of him. Black and white,

beat photos of him hanging out in vraious locals in the big city of Chicago. My favorite picture is this one where he's standing and playing the trumpet. A pretty ordinary picture in most respects, but the difference between this picture and all the other faded Kodak moments of long ago is the lighting. The lighting presents my grandfather as some saintly, bop musician blowing sweet tunes of joy and peace.

So anyhow, I was named after that saintly grandfather, who was also a carpenter, who went by the name of Robert Korzuchowski. My friends, on the other hand, were named after two of my favorite authors, and I(I guess) am wrongly jealous. Now that I think about it, aside from the fact that he left my grandmother, my mom, and my(at the time) three year old uncle, my grandfather was a pretty deep man. He killed himself because he felt he couldn't support his family as a carpenter; he felt he wasn't a man because he couldn't take care of his kids. I don't know; it's just that those feelings and thoughts remind me of my own feelings of inadequacy. He probably wrestled with himself before actually going through with the hanging. My mom tells me that he threatened to kill himself many times under the influence of the bottle. One time, he tried to jump out of a window. The odd thing was that it was a second story window. If he'd a jumped, the most probable injury he would have sustained would have been a broken leg.

A theory about his death was that he accidentally killed himself. Set the whole thing up, wrote the note, but didn't really mean to kill himself. He was to put it lightly in fact, testing the water. He had just meant to put his foot (his head) in the water (the noose), and then, boom, the surface around the pool (the ladder) was slick and he fell in (died, snap). The poor, poor man. I never met him. He remained an enigma throughout my childhood, as I'd sit and look at all the "cool" pictures of him hanging out.

Anyhow, there was me, Marcel, and Aldous, quite a crew hanging out in Hawaii. We had gone to Hawaii to see my dad. Now, this in itself, is a historic event. At least, in my family, we considered it a once in a life time happening. So, one summer, when my dad had invited me to come visit, I leapt at the chance. And to make the visit even more exciting, I brought Aldous and Marcel with me.

So the three of us were staying at the Outrigger Waikiki. All three of us were in one room. The coolest thing about this hotel was the fact that, along with a Bible and the telephone book, we were given a Buddhist Bible. Which really isn't the Bible as the Good Book of Christianity is called. It's just a book with some of Buddha's teachings in it. Aldous and Marcel slept on a queen (bed, that is) while I passed the nights on a day bed across the room. My bed, or at least me when I'm sitting on it, looks out into a courtyard between our hotel and another. Down in the courtyard is this great open-air bar and grill which, besides serving good food, has the best mai tai's on Oahu. Usually, our days begin there. After drinking our fill, we head down to the beach. And after the beach, we go hang out with my dad at his condo.

Our first night in Hawaii began with a nice conversation with the man who missed my childhood.

"So, dad," I asked, "why'd you leave me?"

"I had to get away from things. You've seen Goodfellas, right?"

"Yessir, love that Scorcese flick, and that other great guy, Bobby Deniro. Why'd you ask?"

"Me and your godfather were wiseguys with Jimmy Conway and Henry Hill."

"Right," I said, in total disbelief.

"No, really, ask your mother. Your godfather showed her how to turn back the water meter so we'd not have to pay so much. Richie (my godfather) taught me all the dishonest tricks in the book. Also do you remember how Rickie's bar, The Good Spot, always burned down? Did you think that it was a fire hazard? Don't you wonder how me, a school supply salesman, could afford living in the somewhat posh suburb of New City with all the rich lawyer-and-accountant Jews?"

"I guess I never thought about it."

"You really knew Jimmy "The Gent" Conway?" Aldous Asked.

"I sure did. But his real name wasn't Conway, it was Burke. He was adopted by the Burke's. His mother's name was Conway, or at least that's what they think it is. He was at your Baptism, Rob."

"Wow, my man, you're almost famous," Marcel said. "Who were you in Goodfellas, Don?"

"Never you mind," my father told him. "I don't like much talking about those days. I used to sell pornography out of The Good Spot. When the heat came down in New York, we moved back to Illinois, Prospect Heights, but I still stayed in the business. You know the restaurant we used to go to, Fountainbleu?"

"Yeah, what about it?" I asked.

"Well, that's where Tony Spilotro used to hang out."

"Isn't he the guy that Casino is about?" we asked.

"Sure is. Those boys were part of my life. They are the ones who supported me, and you guys, too, Rob. Anyway, me being in that business, I'm sure you can

understand why I left. I had to get out, and what better place to get out than to Hawaii?"

My dad had married a Japanese, who was a few years his senior. This lady, who was a little rich, had survived Hiroshima. She was kind of daffy, but besides that, she was the nicest woman in the world. It was she who supported my dad, who at this time was so sick that he had to give up drinking. He was epileptic. To honor her he changed from Don Wulf to Don Yamada. I never knew whether he actually did this to honor her, or whether he was conning her. Either way, he seemed happy and content with is life. I gave him my blessing.

Hawaii, what a great place to live. I truly believe that it's paradise. My dad certainly knew where to go to get away from it all. Reminds me that when my life becomes unbearable and the man is breaking down my door, to come to Hawaii to live in total tranquillity. Who couldn't dig Hawaii? I'm sure that I could make myself do anything if I lived in Hawaii. You see, in Chicago, I'm the laziest son-of-a-bitch this side of the Mississippi. But here, ah, here in beautiful Hawaii, I could do anything.

"Well, I packed my bags and bought myself a ticket to the land of tall palm trees. Aloha Old Milwaukee, hello Waikiki"

"Hawaii is definitely the place for me. It was here that I fell in love with Japanese women. They are so delicate, but yet so servile. I love 'em all. What could be better then a beautiful 5'2" woman waiting on you hand and foot. Don't get me wrong, I'm not trying to be sexist and say that women should be subservient. What woman wouldn't want some handsome guy doing the same for her? Everyone wants to be mothered. It's human nature to have such need."

Aldous asked my dad why he married a Japanese woman.

"Well, besides the fact that I really love her, she's the sweetest woman in the world."

"I'll agree with that," I reassured him.

"She's rich enough to live in Hawaii, we go to Japan for months at a time, she makes the best curry chicken I've ever had."

"That settles it, hey," Marcel asked, "I'm quite a fan of curry. You think she could make us some of that?"

The next day, after hours on the beach for us boys, what turned out to be the best curry chicken I'd ever had, and many bottles of Sake (rice wine) we had another chat. "Kampai" as they say to toast in Japan, which we learned from my dad, who seemed like a "Solid" man. But without the Italians, he's converted to Japanese customs. Nothing like some Sake, though. I love that shit. So we had a big discussion about the Beastie Boys, Buddhism, and life, which due to the extreme intelligence of this discussion, I lay out for you all to read. As the cemetery undertaker said to the grave digger, "Dig".

"Now, tomorrow," my dad began. "We'll be going to the Lahaina Jodo Mission on Maui. It's a beautiful place where they have this beautiful statue of Amida Buddha, which is the largest of its kind out-side of Japan. It's a replica of the Buddhist temples in Japan. There's the statue, the temple, a pagoda, and a bell."

"What's a pagoda?" Aldous, our Catholic friend asked?

"This pagoda or Temple Tower, loosely translated, houses niches that holds urns of the cremated. It also has a small altar. Basically, it's like a church or temple. But in Buddhism, there aren't churches where you have to go to mass or anything. Usually, there are temples where people can go to contemplate. But yo'er not required to go to church by God. The Buddhists don't have a god. Except in Tibetan Buddhism, they have tons of gods. But these gods don't really matter. They're not the Supreme being or Yahweh, or Jehovah, or anything like that. In Buddhism, instead of heaven, you, if your Karma's right, might be reincarnated as a god. This cycle of birth and death, of futileness, can all be averted if you figure the world out and reach Nirvana."

"So, that's how it works. You guys aren't trying to convert me or anything of the sort by taking me to this temple?" Aldous asked.

"We's just broadening your horizons, good Aldous," my dad consoled him.

As it is, my dad really has his own religion. He's a mixture of Christianity and Buddhism.

"I like to take what I like out of both religions, and jumble them together. I figure I'll either make Heaven or Nirvana if I go the dual religion route. It kind of opens it up, though. What do you fellas think of Buddhism?" He asked.

"Well," I answered, "I'm a mixer, too. I like your combo of Christ and Buddha, but I throw in Lao Tzu. I love Jesus, but I don't like too much of Christianity. My favorite form of Christianity is Tolstoyan in nature. As for Taoism, Lao knows a lot. He, Chunag Tzu, and A.A. Milne are the great Taoist philosophers."

"Good men do not argue. Those who argue are not good. Those who know are not learned. The learned do not know."

Chuang Tzu's greatness comes from the parable

where he tells of a prince that has appointed him Prime Minister. He goes on to tell the story of his turtle, which for two thousand years, has been worshipped. It's shell, the turtle is long since dead, is bedecked in ceremonial silks and is placed on a shrine. Chunag Tzu tells about this other turtle which lives its life dragging its tail in the mud. Chuang Tzu opts for the life of the plain turtle. As for the great Taoist philosopher that I mentioned, Milne is the creator of Winnie the Pooh. Pooh is Lao's reincarnated spirit. Pooh says, "Those who are clever, who have Brain, never understand anything". I love Pooh, Lao, Chuang, and Jesus.

"Buddhism is my chosen religion," says Marcel. "I love Buddha. 'specially 'cause he converted the Beastie Boys, who are my favorite group in the world. 'specially 'cause Adam Yauch, one of them Beastie boys, is one of my best friends. I like the other two a lot, but they're never too sociable with me. He changed Yauch from:

"I'm hard hitting, nose bending, cool as hell. I got the trees in my mirror so my car won't smell. Sittin' 'round the house, gettin' high, watch the tube. I'm eating Colonel's chicken drinking Heinekein brew."

to

"I try to make my every action for the highest good. With altruistic wish to achieve Buddhahood. So I pledge here before everyone listening To try to make my every action for the good of all beings. I vow to do my best to do no harm. And in times of doubt I can think of the Dharma and the enlightened ones who've graduated Samsara."

"Now, Don-o, what did you think of that?" Marcel asked.

"It's good Buddhist doctrine, I'll say that, but can you dance to it?"

Music Man

Krissi Dunn

Play a song, sweet music man
I need to hear one soon
It's cold here in Illinois
and my life lies deep in ruin
Your love is a beautiful melody
That flows through my heart
It keeps me from going crazy
with loneliness from being apart
Place me a son, my music man
one with a gentle beat
Music that lifts the spirits
Crushed by Life's defeats

Forgiving Us, Forgetting You

Krissi Dunn

We had something special once
A piece of a fairy tale
We wove a tapestry of dreams
But the threads were fragile and frail

We had something real once
It flowed from our souls
Till we wrote down the play
and assigned each other roles.

Now the words don't come easy
And now the smiles are few,
I'm learning to forgive us
But's it's hard forgetting you.

So we sit in straight-back chairs
Guarding who we are
Avoiding one anther's eyes
Trying not to see the scars.

You say that you once loved me
And I'd like to believe that was true
It's hard to get past the memories
of loving me and loving you.

Yeah, now the words don't come easy
and now the smiles are few
I'm learning to forgive us
But it's hard forgetting you.

Forgiving us comes easy
But it's hard forgetting you...

Baptist Devils

Krissi Dunn

Eight hours south of here lies Shelbyville, my hometown
It's a lot like the Twilight Zone, where zombies run around.
They got crooked cops, hot cars, and squabbles involving guns.
But the really scary part is how they raise their sons.
Their boys are all named Junior, Curtis Lynn, or Jackie Ray
And their major preoccupation is rolling in the hay.
They speak manifold and CCS, they drink cheap whisky straight.

Any skinny tow-headed cheesy girl will do for a date.
Their mommas are mostly Baptist, go to church each Wednesday night.
They roll their eyes and pray, and preach that wrong from right.
They got Jesus on the mantle, and Dallas on TV.
They got cornbread in their oven, and act suspicious about me.
"Who is that girl - and who's her daddy? She's from a broken home?
No wonder she dresses funny and walks at night alone!
Could be she's on drugs-Jackie Boy, you'd best watch out
She'll never make a decent wife- of that I have no doubt.
But Junior and Curtis Lynn and Jackie Ray follow me with hungry eyes
Like zombies waiting for nightfall under fire and brimstone sky.
They make me think of voodoo and creepy puppet things.
Their mommas think they're angels, but Baptist devils pull their strings.

Untitled
Jason Dowling

I want to put to rest a history
of rattled composure
and uncertain touches-
burn the words down,
torch this entire stretch
then draws the straight line
form your birth
to my death

Untitled
Jason Dowling

In a strange sort of way
we've become algebraic-
The equation will stay unbalanced-
and wait-
(To my way of thinking)
until we place the numbers on our tongues,
and come together-

Untitled
Jason Dowling

Cold it goes down
like a glass full of satin-
something magic occurs
at the place that my throat turns-
with no one around
I can send myself omens
I like, and lie myself down
in their afterglow-
this futures unknown,
but it's littered with windows, and dance, and wishes
I can lean on this trigger forever.
my fingers won't cramp and you know they don't slip-

I've been there before but I like it here better.
The rest of me failed where the best of me fit.

Untitled
Jason Dowling

Made heavy, the stars sink somehow
beneath the clouds
and hang like an unspelled necklace
in the space between us and the top of the sky,
from somewhere somebody calls one of our names-
but if all goes unheard here,
as we are no pearls
and no words can touch us-

Untitled
Jason Dowling

Oh captain oh can we?
Miss - we kiss unwisely
cuz we know
the call closes
as it does
and when it chooses...
and the numbers and denials
are as daisies
in a frozen place-
Face me taking breaths as fast
as 'can we
now my captain?'

and the embers on her fingers
are as fires
in my broken home-
growing new relations, saying
'can we now my captain?'
Oh...
Twilight is the travel
we commute the day to night
outside the car
great engines humming
we commit to what we are
and come as one into the evening
coating darkness over stars-
we call this distance
but it's really
disbelieving
where we are-

Depths

William Fabrycki

Long into sleep, I glide upward
Slicing warm blue soundlessness,
Watching pink sun lay lace on ripples.
A current embraces, and I maunder
Waiting for stillness

A passing toadfish snighers when
Above the sun's lace spatters
Into squares or rope. The fisherman's
Shadow obliterates light. Still hoping,
I dive deeper into darkness.

Real-Igion

William Fabrycki

A snarling, night wind snap-lashed it's
Cat-o'nine tails,
floggin the soldier boy
when he pitched his rifle into the black
snow-coffin with all those others
and their owners.

War empty, he fled to the old church
where no one else ever came
(the peasants hid high in the hills away from
his kind and the pastor had left for the city),
crawled under the third pew back,
huddlingintight
chest and cheek to the cold floor,
joining only the merciful peace slipping in.

Next thing, warm sun bathed him through
broken windows.
One lid flicked open, a cautious fare-thee-well,
then the other
Sleep gaze edging along rows of pew legs
standing stout, a forest of safety
in the blessed silence.

How was he to know they had night marched to
the next ridge? -- couldn't know until
KABOOMABOOMBOOM-BOOM
they shelled the church(for whatever reason)
and he just tuckedintighter
refusing
ever
to be part of the killing again,
even as he heard the beams thundering down.

Fingerprints

William Fabrycki

Whey they
built new
Highway 2
it turned
out the
double
YY
EE
LL
LL
OO
WW
L
I
N
E
cur
V
ed and
t i t d
w s e like
A
S
N
A
K
E

'cause the
country road
commissioner's

brother-in-law
is the local
under
taker
which is the
way things
are done south
of 1984

Beautiful

Sarah Forsythe

When I look in the mirror
Price elude me
Flaws from every angle
Far from bean-pole bodies
and perfect faces
I flip through the waiting room
overweight
scars of motherhood
what do you see
when you hold me
and softly kiss me
and tell me
I'm beautiful

Settling

Sarah Forsythe

When I was young I played
Snow White and Cinderella
where I was the princess.
I was beautiful, and thin
with a tiny waist
and big boobs
And my imaginary Prince,
tall and dark, with broad shoulders
would ride up on his white horse
and carry me away
Then when I grew a little
The fantasy altered
to the poor mistreated teenage girl
and the varsity quarterback
whose black Mustang convertible
drove us off into the sunset
after prom
Now I am beyond that
I know this because I look at you
As you lay asleep on your stomach
on your twin bed,
Your blistered feet hanging off the edge
Your mouth gaping open
Your snore breaking the silence...
You are not of Royalty
You are 5' 10" with brown hair
and you drive an '86 Caprice Classic
you don't buy me roses
and you don't kiss my ass
But you're nice to me
and you tell me I'm beautiful
and you care what I think
and you listen when I talk
and you call for no reason
just to hear my voice
and you let me be bitchy
and obnoxious
and sad
and you tell me you love me
when I don't even ask
Again, I've grown a little
Hell- maybe a lot
and the fantasy altered
to longer that...
A fantasy
As I look at you
asleep
mouth gasping
snoring softly
I see the Prince
the Whitehorse
the quarterback
the convertible
I curl up next to you
and fall asleep
with no need to dream

She

Sarah Forsythe

She looks over at him
and smiles coyly
knowing full well
who I am
She looks away
and runs her fingertips
across her breasts
seductively...

Then through her hair
pretending
she hasn't the faintest clue
that he is looking at her
I look down
and grit my teeth
angry
But at the same time
jealous
I will never be able
to fondle my breasts
or be seductive
and make other girls boyfriend's
stare at me
But now..
I feel him sitting closer
holding my hand tighter
gazing at me lovingly
It's not the way
he looks at her
It's better
I look up to see her looking down
knowing her thoughts
are anger
and jealousy
She wants to feel someone
sitting closer
holding her tighter
gazing with love
And for that moment
I feel sorry for her
because she will never be me

Untitled

Sarah Forsythe

Maybe I should forgive him
too much time has passed
Let...
It...
Go...
Be mature,
No grudges
But has he really tried
I never notices
and I looked
yet once again
and I can't let it go
But I should be above that
Let...
It....
Go...

Mother

Sarah Forsythe

I lay awake
in the darkness
and silence
Empty
lonely
lost
Longing to hear
the cries of my baby
and feel his soft skin
on my arms
Right thing!
Echoes through my mind
As tears stream down my face
Too young!
As I close my eyes
and see him
having someone else
read to him
and kiss his owies
and tuck him in
someone else to call "mother"
and no one will ever know
what I gave up
Or what I go through
Just so he can have everything;
something I cannot give
so I lay awake
In the darkness
and silence
A mother, Alone.

Mixed Feelings

Claudia Gates

I wanted him the first time I saw him. I yearn for him more then anything in my life. He was such an attractive and considerate person. Ishaq sat behind my best friend Meka in class. Everyday, he sat with a frown on his face. While talking to Meka, I quickly glanced at him. It is so hard to figure out his peculiar expressions. Especially the impact it had on everyone around him. They were distracting, but not to me. I had to admit, it was strange for him to look angry 99% of the time. I still wanted him. Every inch of that chocolate body. Geez, it was hard not to stare. I loved everything about him and for some sick reason, his flaws too. I liked the fact that he wasn't perfect in Algebra class, the only thing I could concentrate on was Ishaq. He didn't pay any attention to my friend and I, or our frequent "gossip

sessions" in class. One day he finally started talking to us. I was telling Meka about this new movie.

"Wesley Snipes is going to be in it. Now you know that movie is gonna be cold!"

"Because Wesley is fine!" Meka exclaimed. We couldn't wait to see it. Wesley Snipes blew Meka's mind. Fudge Fantasy was her pet name for him. It explained her deep infatuation with his dark skin. Ever since seeing Wesley in New Jack City, Meka has been hooked.

"Wait a minute" Ishaq interrupted. "I don't know why ya'll trippin' over him. When it comes to acting and martial arts, Jean-Claude Van Damme is the man!"

Meka looked at him as if he were a complete idiot. Her thoughts were written across her face. "What does this fool know about Wesley?" I imagined her thinking.

"I don't know about all that, but Wesley is one of the best actors" I defended him for Meka's sake.

The bell rang. Meka said goodbye to me, scooped her books up, and disappeared in a flash. I tried to stretch the conversation with Ishaq longer. There was no way I wanted to spoil this opportunity, and I definitely wouldn't talk about anything I only talked about with Meka.

"Isn't this class boring?" I said.

"Summer school always is" he stated as he packed away his books in his backpack.

My mouth became dry. I wanted to say something else, my tongue wouldn't let me. I scrambled for words. Finally I spoke, hoping I didn't sound stupid. "See ya tomorrow" was all that I could blurt out. He said goodbye, as I walked away disappointed with myself. Why couldn't I think of something interesting to say?

I told Meka about my failure that night. She couldn't relate. For weeks I had rehearsed what I would say, if he ever talked to me. And then when he did, I wasn't capable of producing a decent sentence. I wanted to know what she thought.

"I don't know if he likes you or not. all I know is that he's weird. All he does is frown. Why do you keep calling him Ishaq? Everybody calls him Shaq"

"How come?" I said puzzled. This was news to me. As much as I study him, I should have known that.

"Cause he thinks he's all that. He's not as fine as Shaquille O'Neal. I don't know why he's trying to imitate a man that is a hundred times better then he is" Meka paused, "That's why I have no respect for these high school boys. They're all losers."

She proceeded right along bashing Ishaq. Even though, she knew how much I liked him. I never talked about anybody she was interested in. Especially that ol'funky butt, Jheryl. He was in our English class this past school year. He gave a whole new meaning to the phrase chronic halitosis. Dude's breath was on hurt. Forget about offering him Certs. It would probably dissolve in his hands if he blew his breath on it. I told her I would talk to her tomorrow. I had better things to do, like my algebra homework, or dwell on the fact that Ishaq actually said something to me today. I tried hard not to get lost in my dreams. How was I not to think about this? For five weeks straight, he hadn't said a word. There was no way Ishaq would just pop up and converse for no reason. Or could he?

The next day, I walked in class hoping he was there. Ishaq was at his desk staring dead at me. The room suddenly became hot, and I got all sweaty. Avoiding further contact, I made it to my desk.

"Hey girl, you in the blue T-shirt!" he called out.

I turned around slowly.

"I didn't catch your name yesterday."

"It's Paige" I tried not to stutter my voice. His smile was wonderful. It was the first time I had ever seen him do it. The smile faded into a grin that made me feel like warm, melting butter. I imagined myself running my fingers through his soft, curly hair, kissing him on his chest, touching anywhere I wanted to.

"Paige! You do that homework last night?" Meka yelled from the front of the classroom. She rushed to her seat across from me. Mr. Hamilton had stepped out of the room for a cup of coffee. If he had been at his desk, Meka would of been in hot water. His strict tardy policy was no joke. I handed her my spiral, absentmindedly. She took it, searching for last night's homework.

"I'm sorry" I apologized to Ishaq. Why did I say that? What was I to be sorry for? Meka didn't distract me. Her presence was a blur, but his presence was clear as spring water.

"I don't think I told you my name. It's Ishaq, but I prefer to be called Shaq."

Meka turned around and looked at him rolled her eyes upward. Ishaq didn't seem to notice. I gave her a cold stare that meant, if she said anything smart, she was dead meat. Meka got the point, and returned to copying my work.

"Why do you want everybody to call you Shaq?"

"I thought you knew" He was shocked.

"Everybody makes jokes about my name. They really got a kick out of how it sounds. Have you heard the latest one?"

I shook my head "No".

"Shadrach, Ishaq, and Abed-Nego?"

"What?" I still didn't understand.

"Three guys in the Bible. They were taken in captivity by the Babylonians. Their names were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego."

"Oh"

"Ishaq is a Muslim name" He continued explaining. Some of them know that. They assume my religion is Islam, so they try to crack that joke, thinking I don't know what it means. None of these fools can appreciate an African name. I got tired of everybody make wise cracks, so I tell everyone to call me Shaq. It's still part of my name, and Shaquille O'Neal is my favorite basketball player."

Maybe that was the reason for his constant frowning. "Well, I hope you don't mind me calling you Ishaq. I like that name. It's very unique." I meant every word I said. He seemed flattered. Ishaq grinned, making me melt a little more. I hoped Meka had heard every word he had said

The rest of the period, me and Ishaq talked. Well, when Mr. Hamilton wasn't looking. His reason for flunking it, and having to take Algebra over, was laziness. My reason was, I never was good at math (or males, if I might add) period.

"If you run into any problems with tonight homework, you can give me a call" Ishaq offered. I wasn't stupid. I made sure he wrote his number on the back of my spiral. Problem, or no problem, Ishaq would get a telephone call tonight!

My fingers trembled as I dialed the seven digits. A woman answered. His mother I suppose. My mouth got so dry. It took a major effort to say " May I speak to Ishaq, please?" It took her a couple of minutes to go get him. Giving me time to straighten up my act. Ishaq got a hold of the receiver.

"What's up, girl?" His sexy voice sedated me.

"Nuttin' much." I realized I had to think of a reason for calling him. What lie would be the most convincing?"

"Having problems with that homework?" Ishaq said.

"Yeah" I was so relieved he had come up with a lie for me. It did have its downfalls though. For the next half hour, I pretended to take his advice seriously. Finally we started talking about other subjects. Ishaq was tired of his mother's constant nagging. She was disappointed that he was in summer school.

"She's always reminding me that I could be working a summer job, and that due to my lack of commitment to Algebra, I was now paying the price." Ishaq grumbled.

I understood how he felt. "My mother practically gave me death threats. It got so bad, we couldn't be in the same room together. I remembered when she looked at my report card, after seeing an F, all the drama started."

Ishaq snickered.

"That ain't funny. You wouldn't have survived in my house that night. And she's still on me every morning when she drives me to school."

"Sorry about that Paige" He apologized, " I can give you a ride to school if you want."

"All right" I accepted his offer, smiling. At that moment, I can't explain how I felt. Part of me was joyful, the other half was skeptical. Why is he being so nice to me? This question lingered in my conscience day after day. Meanwhile I tried to have fun with him. The clothes I wore were no longer good enough. I went shopping, buying all the freshest gear. My hair had to be prefect. Every two weeks I was in the beauty shop getting it done. Of coarse my personality had to be put in check. From the tone of my voice, to the actions I made in his presence.

We started going out to breakfast before class. He was so much fun. Our conversations grew in depth. There wasn't anything we couldn't talk about. I appreciated that. Meka was upset. She couldn't believe how much time I was spending with him. Despite our disagreements, Meka and I still saw each other. We managed to do that "Girls Night Out" Thang on Fridays.

"Let's get a game going" I hinted to him in our code words.

"Basketball?" Ishaq asked "Girl, you don't wanna get schooled."

I smirked "We'll see 'bout that" Knowing good and well I wouldn't make two points. It was just another excuse to get closer with him. It was clear that we should get together. Or was it all in my mind. I guess so, because Ishaq didn't touch that subject. The game of one-on-one wasn't going well. Ishaq was beating me, fifty to zip. That was Okay. My craving had been fulfilled. I loved when he bumped into me. The roughness turned me on. His body, dripped with sweat, as he dribbled the ball. He charged going up for a lay-up, knocked me over. Ishaq grabbed me fore I could hit the ground. Later I replayed the collisions over and over inside my head. This has gotta be heaven! Exhausted

from the workout, I called it quits, admitting that he won. We listened to old cassette tapes, drinking Gatorade. My mom wasn't home, so we blasted the volume on the stereo.

"I don't care what anyone says. You still cannot play!" I said boldly. I watched Ishaq gulp down the liquid in his glass.

"Yeah, right! You're just mad because you didn't score any points!" He laughed hysterically wiping some sweat from his forehead.

I wished I could wipe it for him. What was wrong with me? Was I too ugly or something? He hasn't made one move all afternoon. Catching me from falling didn't count.

"Listen, Paige, I gotta go. I've been here since noon. I don't want my mom to start trippin', wondering where I am."

"Yeah, I know how that is." I let him out the door.

"See ya later." Ishaq found his keys in his pocket.

"I said good-bye and closed the door. Then, I watched Ishaq through the window as he got into his car and drove off.

My feelings grew stronger and harder to disguise. My mother had the nerve to question my relationship with Ishaq.

"Is he your new boyfriend?" She was so nosy. Leave it to Mama to put it bluntly. She watched me comb my hair into a new style. I had to look good tonight. Ishaq would be here any minute to pick me up. We were going roller skating.

"No, Mama, We're only friends." She continued to put away the towels in the cabinet. I hoped she was satisfied with her current update on my social life. Mamma needs her own life, I thought, gritting my teeth. She did have a point. It made me think. Why isn't he my new boyfriend? The sound of Ishaq's car horn startled me. I cleaned the mess off the sink, saying good-bye to my mother.

"You ready to get your groove on?" Ishaq asked as I fastened my seat belt.

"Yeah," I answered. I'd kill to kiss him now. You should have seen Ishaq. All relaxed in the driver's seat with new clothes and a new haircut. Was he making one of my moves? Going all out just to impress me? Something was up.

"What's with the new clothes?" He allowed my hands to finger his attire.

Ishaq shrugged, "Just felt like improving myself".

But for whom? The annoying question remained in my conscious during the ride. I hoped he improved his looks for me, and not for anyone else. There was no competition at the skating rink, Except Meka, and I know Ishaq wasn't interested in her.

We skated close all night. I tried not to get excited as we held hands. Ishaq insisted that he pay for our food. Meka stopped by to say hi. She refused Ishaq's offer to sit and eat with us.

"Get rid of the jerk!" she whispered in my ear. I shoved her away from me. Ishaq did not question Meka's behavior. The message didn't sink in his brain yet. Meka hated his guts, and it's a shame. All because he dissed Wesley. Oops! I mean Fudge Fantasy.

When we left the roller skating rink, Ishaq came over to chill for awhile.

"You know what Paige?" he sat next to me on the couch.

"What?" I asked, hoping the conversation would turn into persuasion. A persuasion for me to consider being his lady.

"There's this girl I really like. I mean she is done! But I'm afraid to tell her how I feel."

My prayers were answered! Thank you God! I tried to play it smooth, "Oh, really?"

"Yeah, I think she likes me too." There was a slight pause "She's in my Algebra class."

Butterflies fluttered in my stomach. The room started to spin. I felt like a nominee ready to walk on stage and receive the award. "Who is this special lady?"

Ishaq grinned, I was liquid Parkey in his hands. It took eternity for him to speak. I swallowed hard, anticipating the answer.

"Meka," he confessed.

The Reaper

Charles J Hastert

Hacked and hewn and severed limb
My face now blackened, scarred, and grim
I am the maker in your fore-father's eyes
My ears are filled with woes and cries
hear me now, oh mortal man,
for I was here when the world began
Does my soul really exist?
Or am I a creation of your wild imagination
in the morning mist
For I am the evil in the souls of man
And evil, evil is what I truly am!
They will not help your soul full of dread
For you are already maimed and already dead.

Sisters of Mine

Ryan Harrington

They are always running, free from despair.
The concrete doesn't care.
Shoelaces, untied and dangling,
Now flying

Both have scabs.
They fight over a bear called Babs
and color in each other's books
The loser helps Mom cook.

Will they remember...
Remember, the peddling and skipping...
As they race around the fences that give
warnings...
Friendships, sleep-overs, cooties,
and boys?

Beatnik #3

Jeff Hicks

Deep groove forming
coasting coaster
into nowhere
from yeswhere
overunder there
underwear
yellowblue static cling
holding me in
towards Zen
and back again

Untitled

Jeff Hicks

Amy said Hitler was a pacifist
and chartreuse was his favorite color.
Milo had to disagree
believing Alfie-baby was Shinto
eating sprouts on his day off.
He had a fetish for Mr. Pibb soda.
I basically abandon all hope for these two
and go outside and climb on my tire swing
to wait til' dinner is ready.

Gandhi is Saturday Nite Live

Jeff Hicks

Gandhi came to breakfast again
wolfing down a cheese Danish,
with four sausage link chasers,
strange actions for a vegetarian
but none-the-less
such a conversationalist
over trivial matters,
like world peace and famine,
and where to buy a pair of Converse hi-tops,
green of course.
So I painted his picture
but he said it looked like Nixon
Beauty is beholder to the eye
I guess,
as Gandhi was once again out the door,
to meet with his bookie on the fifth street,
'Cause he got a good tip on the second
at Churchill downs

Mothspeak

Jeff Hicks

Her tongue spoke in echoes to me
which seemed askew in an obtuse kind of way
I didn't know the words
but I remembered the feeling
as her hands also had their own vocabulary
subtle murmurs through my hair
and baby talk down my neck
as some of the nicest things she ever said
were never always spoken

Untitled

Jeff Hicks

Controlled chaos
a cornucopia of creativity
mental illusion, delusion
not of true confusion
eclectic, eccentric
mental coded arithmetic
in childhood fantasy, reality
truth of the matter need not be the same

Whipped

Donna Hir

Cruising to the A&P
Where everything is so over-priced.
Just me and my man on a midnight nacho run.

"That'll be $3.53, stud boy"
says the real life blow-up doll
behind the counter.
"Got any plans tonight?" she inquires.
and that's when I nudge him
and smirk while saying
"Don't forget my tampons, dear."

Wonderful

Donna Hir

When the words "I'm sorry"
just aren't enough

When I pour my heart out
to a sheet of paper
because that's all it will ever be

When I see a similar car
and my heart sinks
because that's the closest I'll ever get

When being happy
is a luxury
that only he can afford.

When all the effort in the world
won't change his mind
won't bring him back.

When tears fall
so quietly
because no matter how much
emotion there is
he'll never ever hear me.

All the praying
and the wishing
and the hoping
I'm just a foolish little girl
and he's still wonderful

Little and weak and naive,
a want, a home, a need...
It doesn't matter
but he's still wonderful.

Reality Check

Donna Hir

I walked
where the tiles
met the caulk
where the banister
met the glass
where the people came and went.
I strolled past
the windows
faces stared blankly
back at me.
I struggled to get
beyond my past
but couldn't.
So I stayed
I waited
back in time
I waited for him.
Suddenly I was
tapped on the shoulder
thinking it was him
I turned my head
and was reminded
to take my Zoloft -
remember, 5:00
and now it's time for group
don't be late
but I've already lost him.

What a Miracle She Is

Bob Kot

The two pound baby lies in the large hands,
a pea in a pod.
Helpless was she,
this now healthy newborn.
Her nose is so tiny,
reminds me of the stem of an apple.
She has very little hair,
like the fuzz on a peach.

She sleeps silently,
not yet knowing what a miracle she is.

The Mirrored Lady

Cheryl L. Kraus

"Dammit! Where the hell is?" Virginia's green-eyed glare jumped from here to there. "Where's my purse? Somebody took it! Did you take it?" No one answered. "What's this? Who put this here?" she demanded, arthritic fingers mining the contents of her diaper. Her flaccid face tightened as she drew a soiled right hand to her nose.

"Shit, it's shit! Who the hell put this shit here?" The outraged voice ricocheted off the walls of the tiny room. Bright blue curtains caught the old woman's eye as she searched for someplace to wipe her hand. Crossing the few stepes to the window she pondered her situation as age spotted hands rubbed upon the soft cotton material.

Satisfied that her hands were clean, she scanned the unfamiliar room wondering where she was. Rumpled blankets covered a bed pressed up against the wall. "Where's my purse? How can I go home without my purse?" No reply. She tried to picture home. Nothing! I'll find Joe. Joe is home.

"Where's my purse?" She demanded once again as stiff knees bent to touch the floor. Short cropped grey hair flopped forward as she groped beneath the box spring of the strange bed. Toward the head of the bed, near the support left, she found a clump of tissues. With hesitant curiosity, Virginia peeled the package open. Shiny teeth standing guard in flesh-toned denture plate nestled with the yellow Kleenex. Virginia offered a commiserating 'tut, tut' through pursed lips for the owner of the lost teeth, then stuffed them in her sweater pocket. Inspired by her initial find, she bent back down to explore deeper into the black recesses beneath the bed. Joy flooded her veins when a hand clasped tightly onto a familiarly shaped object. Slowly, coaxing aged legs and rigid back, Virginia stood upright. Peace was temporarily restored by the cracked black vinyl pocketbook clutched to Virginia's breast.

"Hey! I'm hungry!"

Turning her attention to the empty bed, Virginia rummaged through the wrinkled sheets. "No food here! HELP! HELP!," she cried, "SOMEBODY HELP ME!" Virginia tried to open the door, but it was locked. Scared by the realization that she could not remember how long she'd been locked in the little room, Virginia pounded with rounded fists upon the cold hard wood. Maybe she was all alone. Maybe nobody would come to let her out. Desperately she searched her surroundings for something familiar. There. Over there by the dresser was a familiar face. "Oh, I'm so glad to see you. I didn't think anyone was here. I've got my purse, see." She smiled, offering a peek at her prized possession. "My name is Ginny. Who are you?"

The door knob rattled. "I'm going home now. It was nice of you to come and see me. Thank you." Then leaning close with a conspiratorial whisper she confided, "They're not very nice here, you know. They never feed me." Virginia, Ginny to her own mind, turned expectantly toward the door, hopeful that the newcomer would bring food.

Virginia was frightened by the surly looking woman who entered. Worried that the woman might be mad at her, Virginia smiled encouragingly. The newcomer looked around the room, eyed the blue curtains dejectedly, then offered a brisk "Morning." Virginia's smile broadened. She was glad to know what time of the day it was. "I'm hungry, I haven't eaten in a long time. Can I eat now?"

"No." The woman said, grabbing Virginia's hand and pulling her along. "You have to have a bath first." They were going into another room, smaller than the first. Virginia eyed the white walls and bare floor, and knew that she didn't like this room. Then the woman began taking off Virginia's clothes.

"Where's my purse?"

"Your purse is right here. You can't take it in the tub. Now sit on the toilet for a while. I've got to throw your clothes in the washer. And don't move. I'll be right back."

Virginia sat on the cold hard seat, ignoring disassociated bodily noises. Boy, it stinks in here, she thought. That woman should clean her house once in a while.

"IT STINKS IN HERE" she yelled. "STINKS! Who stole my clothes?"

Virginia was starting to shiver by the time the woman came back. It stinks in here you know." The woman ignored that comment and started pulling Virginia over to a big tub of water, squeezing tightly on Virginia's arms as she guided the older woman into the warm water. Seated in the stark white tub, Virginia shivered again, complaining. "Too cold, too cold." The woman reached across the tub, adjusting the faucet. Virginia watched the water gush from the spigot. "Too hot, too hot" she screamed, trying to scramble out. The woman held her still, readjusting the temperature. Wide, wounded eyes looked imploringly at the woman bent

over the tub, briskly scrubbing arms and legs.

"Why are you so mean to me?"

****

"Hurry up, kids, or you'll miss the bus. Lisa, don't forget to call if you need a ride home. Hen, here's money for milk. Give me a kiss." Laura gave her girls smacking kisses as they filed out the kitchen door. "Have a good day."

As the morning ritual began, Laura thought about last week's phone call from her sister. Beth had only gotten through one of the two weeks she was supposed to keep Virginia when, in a tearful phone call, confided that she was having chest pains, and couldn't sleep. Laura had hollered at her big sister, remember how sick with Rheumatic Fever Beth had been when she was twelve year old. Laura scolded Beth for getting so upset and ordered her sister to bring their mother back.

Things were not much better in Laura's house. The kids hated the mess and smells generated by Virginia's incontinence. Laura worried that she spends so much time cleaning up after her mother that the girls were being shortchanged. Laura thought about the 4-H meeting one Wednesday night. Seven of the girls young friends had gathered in the living room for their horse club meeting. One of the kids sat on the couch, only to discover a cold wet spot. How could Lisa and Jen explain that their grandmother had peed on the furniture? The kids simply stopped asking their friends over to the house.

Laura was having trouble sleeping herself. She knew it started the night she was awakened at 2:30am by a cold clammy hand prodding her back. She'd jumped up to find Virginia standing over her, purse in hand. "I'm hungry", she'd complained, looking around the room for something to eat. Laura had put Virginia back to bed, they layed awake the rest of the night listening. Their old farmhouse, surrounded by woods, was situated on an unlighted county road. The thought of her mother wandering out of the house in the middle of the night scared Laura enough that she started locking her mother in the bedroom at night.

Laura had everything ready in the bathroom when she heard her mother yelling and pounding on the bedroom door. Making her way to the little room off the kitchen, Laura paused a moment to start the washing machine's fill cycle.Outside her mother's room, Laura exhaled a weighty sigh, steeled herself, then opened the door. Greeted by the strong stench of stale shit, Laura held her breath as she inspected the damage. No worse then usual, she thought, as she acknowledged the cheery culprit. Anxious to contain any residual mess, Laura grabbed her mother and double time marched her to the bathroom. As Laura began striping off the soiled clothes and disposable diaper, she tried not to think about the smell. Recalling the conversation at dinner the night before, Laura pictured the 'Christmas morning pleasure' in Virginia's eyes as she marveled over the previous night's reheated leftovers and exclaimed "Meatloaf! I Haven't had meatloaf in a long time."

"Yeah, Grandma. Here, have some more." Lisa jokingly offered her portion of the day old dish. "And we can have it again tomorrow, too." Lisa continued. Laura's kids laughed, knowing that tomorrow night the meatloaf would again be something that their grandmother "hadn't had in a long time." Laura guessed that survival deepened upon finding something funny in every situation.

"Now sit on the toilet for a while. I've got to throw your clothes in the washing machine. And don't move. I'll be right back."

Standing at the washer, Laura searched each pocket as she tossed her mother's slacks and shirt into the machine. Inspecting the sweater, she came across Virginia's dentures, rolled in yellow tissue. They were clean and white. Laura pictured them as they were the last time Virginia had gotten hold of a bag of Hall's cherry-menthol cough drops and eaten the entire bag in one day. Everytime Virginia smiled for days afterward, perfectly even false teeth glowed hot pink in her satisfied grin. She'd looked like a five year old who'd just consumed twin cherry ice pops.

"IT STINKS IN HERE. STINKS!"

"Laura shoved the bulky sweater in, added soap, then hurried back to the bathroom; Afraid that her mother might try to wipe herself and make a bigger mess.

Holding tightly to her arms so the older woman did not slip, Laura guided her mother into the tub. Now in a familiar liturgy, Virginia complained, "Too cold, too cold" Then "Too hot, too hot." Laura clenched her jaw in frustration as she tried to adjust the water temperature to her mother's satisfaction.

When Virginia was finally satisfied that the water was not too hot or too cold, Laura started scrubbing off the dried mess that had escaped the diaper. It amazed Laura, how strong and healthy her mother's body was. She remembered the episode in the yard. Virginia had been outside while Laura and Frank were mowing the grass. Virginia, her ever present purse slung over her arm, was walking around the house. Laura thought the fresh air and exercise would be good for the

old lady. As work progressed on the grass, Virginia walked faster. Laura watched as her mother speeded up and began circling the house. Soon Frank had joined in the watch. Virginia was moving faster and faster, finally reaching an all-out run. Frank had to catch Virginia to get her to stop, fearful that she might fall. Laura asked where Virginia had been going, but Virginia could not say.

"Why are you hurting me?"

Laura finished washing her mother, dried her off, then escorted her to the bedroom. After Virginia was dressed, Laura once again locked the door while she cleaned up the bathroom and started Virginia's breakfast.

When Laura opened up the door ten minutes later, Virginia was standing in front of the wall mirror. "Everything OK, Mom?" Virginia nodded then pointed to the mirror. "Who's that?" Confused, Laura asked, "What who?"

Virginia beckoned Laura closer. Side by side they stood in front of the mirror. The older woman's attention lingered on the sparkling cat-eyes crinkled in joy, then shifted to the second reflection. "Who's that?" A finger pointed at her youngest child. "That's me Mom." Virginia turned to Laura, reached out, then touched her cheek gently. "Who are you?"

"I--I'm your daughter, Laura."

"Satisfied with that answer, Virginia turned back to her own reflection. "Who's that? I think I've seen her before. She's always smiling at me. I like her." Turning toward Laura, Virginia asked, "She's a nice lady, don't you think?"

Laura gazed at the reflection of her mother; one, cold hard glass--one warm, soft flash. Wiping wet cheeks briskly, she wrapped an arm around Virginia and answered.

"Yes, she was a very nice lady."

Untitled

Tracie Laczynski

Where is the inspiration
That washed over me an hour ago
A day ago...A year
What happened to the ocean
That made me weep and laugh and love
Where is the hate, the depression
Did I forget
something
while I was searching
for a reason
If I wade long enough in this water
Shall I find what the eyes
Cannot see
And hear the songs of whales
Whose beauty is crystal blue
And soft and sharp
Caressing yet probing...Revealing
Do they speak to me
Through my window at night
When the rain pours down
Washing away the house I live in
The fears I dream I have
The regularity of waking and sleep
Do I find in my dreams
What I cannot find in my reality
Do I wait for long
Or do I go and search again
As I did when I was lost before
Did I ever find myself the last time?
I can hear the whales...

An Old Candy Man

Amy Lingafeiter

Part time hell tonight
a short old man, red of face, pale of hands,
right hand and hip shaken by stroke,
shuffles to me in the flaming late shopping complex
with an 80 year old's pick up,
something about me being one of them models.
He comes way too close, not like a pervert,
I think he can't see me squint
my black dress and wild hair.
He professes that the only thing that brings him pleasure now is girl watching-

"You know, they say Hollywood has all the pretty girls"

Shake quiver squint

undying devotion of a wrinkled Illinois man
to Midwestern mall rat girls

"But there sure are some pretty ones around here"

shake quiver squint

waytooclose

"And you're one of them"
personal space has been invaded, he's
TOUCHING me.

I, with a motherly -me his mother, sure- pat on
the back
and a "Thanks", he leaves, promising to
shuffle back
the next time...

Bubble Houses
Amy Lingafelter

Young, maybe 9,
drawing houses,
planning rooms,
making pretty little families to live in them
Blonde sisters and burly brothers.
Big TV in every room.
Bubble houses (what I called them).
Stainless sinks.
Clean towels that match
the wallpaper in the bathroom.

Bubble houses on the moon.
here lives sister and brother.
Here lives me
coming home after Yellowstone
in my purple hooded jacket
Sisters - They're so cute
do my hair up so pretty.
Brothers - I can cheer as they
run the football.

The bubble is all clear,
all can see inside to
the perfect matching towels in the bathroom.

...Drew a bubble house today
then decided 9 year olds are stupid.
10 years since now.
Tried to forget
my purple jacket
little ponies
cabbage patch
dancing in my bedroom
to me in the mirror.

So here lives me.
My life enhanced
by vomiting on the kindergarten teacher,
here lives me
explaining unexplainable 9 year old actions.
My life enhanced by making up
a fashion family.
Unexplainable.
If it's all a part of me
and it all fits together,
where will I live?
Bubble houses?
and here lives me.

Sad Poem Fodder
Amy Lingafelter

I am sad poem fodder.
I have need too many times to myself.
I know I am great.
I push everyone else.
I am too tall fatness.
I walk funny during football.
I have no appendix
I got candy to stop crying about it.
I miss my appendix.
I am too baggy and cold shouldered.
I am cigarettes and bed sheets.
I am big eyed and big skied.
I am a Saturday night girl.
I spend my Saturday nights lighting myself
on fire at the intersections of busy streets.
I am also a Tuesday night girl.
I get more interesting every time I look in the mirror.

An Eighth Sister Locking Out and Passing Over
Amy Lingafelter

I lived in the Pleiades all last summer
with a happy Hiawatha all too eager to show his
magic.
The seven sisters bothered me in the dry sob
season
of pick up trucks and books not finished.

So I locked out my family and lived on,

eating hydrogen and liquid nitrogen and
negatively charged particles

until I sparked and glowed like lava.
Eighth sister, electric in books and songs
shines for no one by the Gitche Gumee or
Lake Michigan
or rain puddles in the driveway of my home in
the stars.

Just north of heaven, seven sisters with the
eighth not far behind
down in the eternal summer,
sacking up, the slut sister
dating that Hiawatha again.
The sisters are jealous, locked out of my room
and diary.
They can't read my books or listen to the
songs,
the songs in the Pleiades, with Hiawatha and his
chickens
today abandoned by electric lava sister who

"Carries moonbeams home in a jar"
doo dee doo dee doo deeda doo
and I promise Hiawatha from the rain
puddles I bathe in
not to hum "Moon River".

Glowing, I DID finish that book
and it was a dry sob-

"Just get the movie" I tell my seven sisters
before leaving our tiny summer cottage in
the Pleiades

On the shores of Gitche Gumee or Great
Lakes or rainy puddles
The eighth sister has left
the stars and is heading just south of
somewhere to pick up truck
with Hiawatha and Truman Capote-

Dill... He was DILL.
(I recommend the book over the movie in this
case)

Pocketing from the Pleiades on a bull's back to
Mexico, the only place just south of
somewhere

magic Hiawatha and his truck

left for dead in the Andromeda galaxy

and from muddy puddle that I
cross in style on Mexican nights

I finish all the books and him all the songs I
want to
I glow brighter then the seven sisters

and forget the magic comets and the Great
Lakes,
passed over with dry sobs and mile wide
puddles.

Saturday Morning Song

Amy Lingafeilter

Lots of people get up early on Saturdays
Lots of older people that is
I hear them in their boat cars. Saturday
morning breakfast
I hear some work people with saws
I hear the sleep in my house and the clocks
in the living room
chiming it's time for me to eat. Get dressed,
breathe, something.

Teenage hours of carefree sleep. I'm a fool.
I should've prepared myself for sad Saturday
mornings,
feeling old about the future.
My sister says I should stop drinking water,
and then I'll stop crying.
But I don't think that's been scientifically
proven yet.

So I'm up very early on a Saturday,
Knowing that you have forgotten,
or you don't care, or something.
Remember how you screamed at me.
"Do you know how many times the phone
rang and it wasn't you?"
So the world would be a better place without
phones. I'm now convinced.

Saturday morning comes in and tells me
"It's his loss."
But Saturday morning can't make me feel any
better.
He's the one who pushed me out of bed this
morning
to meet saws and some sunny little sky

he's made me sit on a couch and pray all the
cars that went by were yours.

Another half hour chimed by
and in 5 more hours it will be Saturday
afternoon to bug and bother me.
chime - time to get up and do something I think
time to turn on the TV to keep me company
time will come later
and I will look in the mirror and take heed of
all the
"you're a very pretty girl's. Take solace in
some new dress or shoes
that will no doubt bring me what I want.

Imagine me walking up to you, nose up in the
air.
I just don't care
I will get some friends or something, we
will complain that you're a fuck
for doing this to me
But first I have to get off Saturday
morning's couch

Saws are pounding hammers now, boat cars are
still sailing
I will listen to some 70's "Carefree
Highway" song that reminds me of
when I could sleep all Saturday morning
I will take another breath
Perhaps I'll try the whole not drinking water
thing - It might work
Saturday morning will be along to help me
soon.

Militia

Ralph W. Mlaska

I know what's goin' down.
I get the eyeball everyday
from the corner.
I suppose it's my fault
I let myself get old
and a little fat.
I guess it makes me look easy.
But I can still chew the leather.
My neighbors had fortressized
their houses.
Those whistles and bells
ain't gonna do them any good
they gotta come out and be seen.
They gotta let them know
they be unified.
I hate this shit!
These gutless wonders are
forcing me into.
I hate guns, got good reason too.
But I keep one by my bed,
one in my car,
one by the sofa.
Ya! This old dog
still has a few teeth left.
Don't want to live like this,
but I know what's goin' down.

Ode to Nam

Ralph W. Mlaska

Bodies to dust and barrels to rust
but what of the rest of us?
The half-living and half-dead
the grateful. full of dread.
Why did I survive better men?
At times makes me feel sad but then.
To hell with your cries from the sandy silt.
Because I lived, must I die in guilt?
In my head I still hear you moan,
you lucky bastard, you made it home.

Apology To B. Howes

Ralph W Mlaska

Ashamed of what I did
when I was a kid
I thought you would like to know.
I fed Alka-Seltzer to sea gulls.
Just to watch the birdies blow.

Limited Funds

Ralph W Mlaska

Large checks never bounce
like little checks do.
At twenty dollars for each bounce,
I wonder why that's true?

Broken rhythm

Ralph W Mlaska

Got up early this morning

feeling mighty fine.
Made it to the station
waiting for number nine.
look at my watch
it's gonna be on time!
.....Forgot my wallet.

In Memory of Angelica

Ralph W Mlaska

Wide eyed children gaping into a dark callous world.
A dark world where the sun shines its radiant energy for fast growing weeds and only protected flowers flourish.
This place where trusting conceived in love children die in a world of plenty.
I Said Children!
Beautiful black African babies with bloated bellies, small wrinkled hollow cheek over aged faces transfixed in a death stare, beyond hope,...lost.
I Said Lost!
Forever gone, vast fields of uncultivated intelligence laid to waste. Hands that will never grasp, feet that will never walk, arms that will never embrace,...Vanished.
I Said Vanished!
Are the Romanian progenies deteriorating in obscure gloomy places from the man spread sex sickness.
Shunned, feared, parked, and put away where cries won't be considered,...fading.
I Said Fading!
In the memory of the death fields of Cambodia. A yellow skinned dark eyed brood of silent screams in forgotten locations where no god walked, or showed mercy.
I Said Mercy!
To the unseen, unborn torn apart remains of the abortionist tools. Those red saline scalded flushed down the bowl vague, unacceptable, unloved, burdens of passion. Made victims of adolescent folly, adult indifference, and greed. The good lives victims.
I Said Victims
Of political strife, Fire hair, freckle-faced, rope-skipping, tag-playing bomb throwers. Green Irish decedents fighting their grandfather's war. Reason lost and home gone, capped when they fail. Mother in black loose flowing robes following behind small shouldered carried caskets, marching to the next generation.
I Said Marching!
To Allah's Beckoning. Ten year old bullet catching frag stoppers. Martyrs of another true god. Consumed in a napalm hell for superstitious glory, wasted.
I Said Wasted!
Are the years of hoping, building, planning, dreaming, working, and loving,. Stolen, Taken away by the punks in a drive-by. Perverts, gangs, and dope-dealing degenerate parasites, roaming the city streets, suburban schools, and country back roads. Hiding in gangways, alleyways, and cracks. Pouncing on susceptible naive minds. Forming them into creatures of their own kind, or murdering those that cannot fight back. Feeding on degenerated fear that somehow makes their dull minds feel alive.
I Said Alive!
Are the excuse giving-governments, Bible-thumping it's God's-will, it-ain't-my-problem-rich, we choose to be ignorant poor, we don't have the time to listen to intellectuals.
I Said Listen!
To the cries of the South American freedom fighters, dying for an idea that always seems to slip away.
Leaving orphans, diseased, hungry, suffering in dirt-floored tin-roofed shanties. Cast out to live in sewers hiding from death squads that track and kill them before they even know their own names. Their crime, stealing to live just one more day. Digging in city dumps for pieces of cloth or something to sell. Educated in the city slums huddled in small communes eating the maggot-riddled leftovers of the happy tourist. Children dragging children, hand in hand, tired and spent.
I Said Spent!
Are the children of ethnic cleansing, These are the damned for every stupid reason. A modern tribal war for ancient history that is remembered by none. Their small hearts pounding, with fear.
I Said Pounding!
At your indifference door, The madmen that come for every generation.

Far Away

Ralph W Mlaska

There is a land called Eichigo
Where the rivers are short and swiftly flow.
Rushed pure waters from ancient mountains,
nourish the land from sacred fountains.
Fed by snow-covered peaks thrusting
majestically
into a royal purple Pacific sky.
Blowing clear ocean winds steadily,
pushing white-pillowed clouds slowly by.
Fluttering through pine woods are seen,
nervous gay-colored birds that sing.
swooping down terraced paddy slopes

through the valley of spotted antelopes,
banking over emerald fields on a gentle breeze,
that softly moves the blossomed trees.
Freeing the fragrant petals to a spiral dance,
slowly falling, Often Stalling,
Beckoning a memory's melancholy trance.

What is Love?

Evonne Myers

Love to me is a four-letter word that often people abuse.
Love should be taken serious, it's not just a line you use.
No, Love is something honest and great.
Love is something you appreciate.
You don't say "I love you" when you feel the heat.
You don't say "I love you" then go out and cheat.
Love is something special--that's what I've heard.
Love is not just some four-letter word.

Bzz

Maria Mellinger

He threw an empty Skippy jar
(That's me - the empty Skippy jar. In the symbolism of this poem, I am the empty Skippy jar, once sticky and delicious, complicated, fitting for a number of sandwiches, and lifestyles, adaptable, and loved by all, once; now empty, see through, transparent, easily damaged with a lid likely to rust, damaging if broken and within biting distance of skin, sin...)
Down at a fallen beehive
(the fallen beehive - he thought it wasn't dangerous, unlike the fallen woman - oh how she can sting...)
and like a grand explosion
on the fourth of July,
yellow jackets burst out in red white and blue
(red, back to symbolism, being the color of the harlot; while white the doctor's labcoat;blue the blues, the absolute sadness of being in love with someone so beautiful when you are simply an empty Skippy jar, an insanity...)
and stung him twenty three times.
"I ran through the house," he said,
"and into my room, and all I can remember
are the bees coming under the door--"
(and how terrible is that, the whole time he's telling you this, your staring at his thighs in their dirty blue jeans, imagining the view the bees must have had as they worked their way up, wanting him so bad, feeling the sting...)
"--and stinging some more."

1692 Cotton Mather Newsreel, Part 2

Maria Mellinger

Her mind and body began their required tasks each morning at 6:00am, when she called the recorded time and temperature message provided by the First National Bank.

"Good morning," she would say.

"Good morning," the tape would say. "First National Bank time: 6:00am."

"And the weather?" she'd ask.

"The temperature outside is 64 degrees, with sunshine and low winds throughout the day."

"Well have a pleasant day."

"Have a pleasant day," the recording would echo.

"Yes, thank you," she'd conclude.

She would then wander her house for hours, watering plants, shuffling dust particles, throwing away magazines, talking with the radio. At 10:00am she would board the bus and speak with whoever sat next to her.

Once her partner was a young man who stole her purse, which held only change. The theft led to a nice afternoon spent at the police station, answering questions. The officers gave her coffee and a wonderful stale slice of coffee cake. She rode home that evening in a squad car, quite content.

This particular day. however, provided no partner, and so she spoke to herself. She knew better than to move her lips, of course, as this caused unnecessary concern about younger passengers.

After buying magazines to replace those of the discarded morning's, her misshapen body would enter the bargain movie house and become someone else's. Some days she was Audrey Hepburn in "My Fair Lady," singing and dancing, tasting soot and champagne. Some days she was Katherine Hepburn in "The African

Queen," floating through a jungle with Humphrey Bogart, acting bold and adventurous, alive.

On very good days, she was Scarlet O'Hara or Elizabeth Taylor in "Giant," because she was these women for three or four hours instead of the usual two.

After the movie, she would sit in the darkened theater and pray. The manager took pity on the wrinkled little woman, thinking her tired, and allowed her to stay until the 2:00pm children's shows began

For 75 years, she prayed, "Help me find someone." It was only recently that she began to pray, "Help me..I'm lonely..."

Shortly after 2:00pm, she would exit the theater through the side door, so as to avoid contact with anyone. She couldn't face people with the pain so evident in her eyes, and her lips would move as she thought, they must not see her. The day's tasks were complete. She rode the bus home in silence, ate a dinner of soup and crackers, and went to bed, setting her alarm for 6:00am.

A Great Heap of Nylon and Sashes

Maria Mellinger

It is said that after an Indian funeral
the clothes of the dead are thrown on thorn bushes
so the spirits, the fears, the witches of the village
can not grab them and use them in curses.
I fear normalcy. I fear the spell
of the status quo. I throw my clothes
about the hotel room floors, the cheapest whore,
making men pay with experience, with stories.
My thorns cost thirty dollars. My curse
was to be different and now I embrace it.
I dance with the witches at the Fairfield Inn.
I let them in. I lock the door.
The clothes wear thin and the thorns
won't hold them when I die

Yes, it is, it's True

Maria Mellinger

Would you like to read a sad poem, Steev?
The kind of poem that convinced you
I was lonely and in mourning,
Depressed and crazed, like you?
Would you?
Well, twice or three times upon a time
A cool boy alienated himself with his ideas.
His attitude, his hip clothes, and his poetry.
He liked skateboarding and shoplifting,
Short girls and writing
He always said he was lonely.
"Lonely, and lonely, oh, so lonely."
I wrote a story about a lonely old woman
Who took the bus to the movies each day
And prayed. The title of the story,
"1962 Cotton Mather Newsreel,"
About another lonely woman.
The cool lonely boy cut the story out of
Our college paper and pasted it
In his notebook. He felt less lonely.
When he met me, the author, he was lonely
In poetry only.
We became friends, Steev,
Man this punk boy who tried so hard
To be lonely.
This story is supposed to convince you that
I'm Lonely since the cool boy left me,
That I'm in mourning, depressed and
crazed,
Like you.
But it was you, Steev, who left,
Who decided it was cooler to be lonely,
Who craved to be crazed, who wrote
"1692 Cotton Mather Newsreel Part 3."

Judit Shook Out Her Hair Most Mythologically

Maria Mellinger

Judit told me she once had a lover whose hair
Came off and clung to her like sweat on a
sophomore's gym suit.
She would have to rinse, she said, in two tubs of
water
and a sprinkle of baking soda, shake out the sheets,
set the pillows on fire, and forget. Then as she fried
eggs
With onions in the morning, that man's hair would
appear in the pan

And dance like melting butter. She scorched that pan.
She planted onions in the mattress. She cut her hair.
She took a lover who raised chickens in his backyard,
eggs
in the garage, feathers in his eyelashes. His only suit
was brown. His nails were short. His sheets
were flannel, creased from an iron, washed only in
water

And a sprinkle of baking soda. Judit had water
on her mind when she went to his faucet, saw the pan
in the sink with hair, great sheets
of hair, holding to the sides, hair
not from chickens or a mohair suit,
but hair from her lover, holding even the eggs

In his tangled grip. Judit felt strangled like the eggs
unallowed to hatch on the shelf in the
garage, next to the water
heater and the air compressor, the dirty mechanic's
jumpsuit.
She ran and ran, from another pan,
and took a lover with a toupe from the Hair
Club for Men. "This humbug of hair at least stands out
on the sheets,"

She said, shaking her head and her laundry on the line,
sheets
she sewed herself, scarves with cables and knots,
quilts in robin's egg
blue and the hues of every single head of hair
she had ever known. She left this man, too, on the day
of the Water
Ways Fest in downtown Joliet. She bought an antique
iron pan
from a street vendor. She touched a child's head. She
put on a suit

Like a wedding gown and went out on the town. To suit

her style she studied the heads of each passerby and the
sheets
of lifestyle information in every set of eyes that
would pan
across the horizon, holding the bird's nests, hatching the
eggs,
Blessing the beasts with wonder and water, water.
Judit shook out her hair

Like Pan playing a flute with a hand full of eggs,
his suit of individuality and eccentricity hanging like
sheets
of water, falling, clinging, lonely, like a lover's hair.

Bedazzlement and Rebellion

Maria Mollinger

"What are you trying to prove?" he asks me,
"With your lifestyle, your sestinas, your blonde streak
of hair? Who are you trying to fool? What do
you plan to do with the rest of your airs?
With your lifestyle, your sestinas, your blond streak
of conventionality, how can you claim individuality?
You plan to do with the rest your airs
what children's pop-up books do for the literature
of conventionality. How can you claim individuality?
How can your flights of fancy survive such frivolity?
What children's pop-up books do for the literature
of today is reduce it to seductive reaction.
How can your flights of fancy survive such frivolity?
You merely oppose influence. What you do to the world
of today is reduce it to seductive reaction,
bedazzlement and rebellion. As the principal spellmaker,
you merely appose influence. What you do to the world
is not reactionary, but reaction. Miraculous, what you
are trying to prove, my dear.
I applaud you, if only because of hair,

aerialists and fools. What else can you do?"

Jeremiad

Maria Mellinger

The lobster danced
Through the zodiac
Stuffing stars
In his overall pockets,
Clutching a crystal
And insngi an oracle
He twisted
Like a noodle on a spoon,
Smiled like spaghetti sauce
Red and spicy,
He snapped his pincers
To a U2 song:
"If I could
You know I would
If I could
I would
Let it go."
I've heard these words before.
I do not know
How to reorganize them
Into a trip.

"There is No One better," the seamstress Says

Maria Mellinger

When he goes to get his shirts fitted
The girls gasp at his huge neck.
It comes straight down
From the back of his head
Without grace or delicacy.
It has the important mission
Of supporting his knowledge
and his twice weekly shaved head.
It is for his heroic foundation for
Thoughts and invention too think
For the ordinary man.
He gets those tremendous shirts, then,
With sleeves stubborn in their length
(Far too long for his arms)
That tease his fingertips
As if better a man should wear
The uniform.

We All Have To Go

Michael O' Brien

It happens like this: I'm behind the bar on a Sunday night. Sunday nights are notoriously slow: most people don't even know we can serve drinks, and I've been sneaking short beers most of the night. I'm not talking to my wife because the damn cats seem more important than I do. You know -- the stupid fights. We argued about this and as I was leaving through the garage, I threw the Siamese in the dryer and closed the door on it. So I don't call her like I normally would at this time. And besides, the Stealers are losing again, nothing else is on TV, and all the wine glasses are polished.

This is when it happens. Nobody's at the bar and this old couple walks in. They're both dressed nicely, sport coat, dress, that kind of thing--usually a big tip. They appear similar in the face, almost like brother and sister, but he's much taller and holds her up by the arm as they walk. This is what I remember. He's holding her up. Picture this: he even pulls the chair out for her. It all seems so romantic. Nothing like we do anymore.

She asks what kind of gin we have and I tell her. They both order a Gordon's extra dry martini straight up, but she wants--and get this, because I've never heard it before--she wants her weak.

"Weak?" I ask.

"Make two the normal way," he says. "Pour half of hers in mine, and give hers a little water."

I do this and get ready to put olives in them.

"No olive," she says.

"Put it in mine."

I give them their drinks and he pays me. I return the seventy-five cents change and he leaves it on the bar.

It's part of my job to make conversation--it keeps those tips coming. "Still snowing?" I usually ask about the weather first, get a feel for the people.

"Yes," he says.

Of course, it's still snowing--fucking December and I can see out the window.

"Not like in forty-three. That was a hell of a snow storm," she decides to add.

Do you know what the guy's doing now? The old fart's watching the game, and I'm stuck talking to his wife.

So I ask them, I say, "Are you out Christmas shopping?

Without looking away from the television the old man says, "No kids to shop for anymore. It's not

right we outlived them."

This from nowhere. I can't believe it's happening like this. I ask about shopping, my Ashley's pissed at me, and the guy's going to tell me about his goddam dead kids. And you know how Ashley is about kids, what with her not able to have any.

"You and you death talk. That's all you talk about," the wife says.

"We all have to go someday," he says. "Isn't that right?"

"Yes, I suppose so," I answer.

This couple, being they're old, and I mean old, are probably going to die right here at my bar, and I'm going to be the one to have to clean up. So I'm keeping an eye on them, watching the old man's skin sag over his cheekbones. The skin almost seems too large. You could've pulled it at the edges and stretched it tight across his face. I thought about flipping one pouch of skin just to see it swing back and forth, but I didn't.

"How old do you think we are?" she asks.

"Late sixties?" I know I'm flattering them, but it's been a slow day, and Ashley and I need the money.

"Eighty-two and he's eighty-five," she says.

"Never would have guessed it, I say. But the look like they're a hundred, with the flabby skin, age spots, and what have you. And this old lady--with hair obviously dyed brown, and dentures flopping around in her mouth when she talks--she actually believes I think they are younger.

They were quiet for a few minutes, him watching the game, her stirring her drink. I had taken the lite tap off and was washing it in the sink. She was almost half-finished with her weak martini and he was still crushing olives in his.

"We've been married sixty years." she says," and now he wants to get rid of me."

This is happening right in front of me--this whole argument going on, but they're not really getting mad about anything. They're sitting there fighting but they don't even raise their voices.

Do you know what the old man has to say? He slowly turns his chair toward her, cocks his head slightly, juts his chin out and says," The young man never asked that. You volunteered that information."

I try to watch the game on TV. I try to picture what Ashley's doing, who she's talking on the phone to, what she's telling them. Anything but these two. She probably called her sister, Isabel, like she always does. You know how that goes. And I wonder if she's found the cat

"We should have taken more trips with the kids," The old woman says. "But no," she says, "we had to go alone. Look where that got us."

"I have to change a keg," I tell the couple. This is true--I was too lazy to do it earlier, but I know if I don't go now, I'll start laughing at this old couple, arguing over nothing. And I need another drink.

It gets even better now. I come back and they're arguing about the tip.

"Put another quarter on the bar," she says.

"No," he says. "Just plain no."

And I'm thinking, lady, a quarter ain't shit, don't worry about it. But I don't say because I'll take the three coins.

"Don't be so damn stingy with your money," she says.

He and I are both pretending to watch the game. I'm thinking Asheley's probably telling Isabel, "That damn Kurt, all he cares about is himself. He locked one of the cats in the dryer, for Christ's sake. All this after ten years. We argue about the dumbest things. When he does nothing for me, how can I tell he loves me? He knows I love the cats and him, too." I can really picture her saying this. It's happened before. We argue. I go to work. She calls Isabel.

And this old man is probably thinking about another drink. I can tell, working on this side of the bar as long as I have, and besides, I could use one too. And, get this, I guess I'm sorry. Sorry this old man needs a fresh martini--sorry I threw the cat in the dryer and yelled at Ashley, all of nothing. All over an animal. None of it over love.

It happens again. "Why won't you put another quarter up there?"

"Just to spite you. Just because you want me to."

She's silent for awhile, finishes her drink, and asks for water.

She's slouched on her chair, like people get after awhile, and I wondering if she's drunk. "Are you almost finished?" she asks her husband.

"In a minute."

"Let's go," she says. "Him and his God-forsaken liquor. I had a brother who always had his nose in a bottle."

"There you go again, volunteering unimportant information."

She gets a wrinkled look on her face. Picture it: She looks like a bulldog. He really is watching the game now, ignoring his sixty-year wife. I think this is what irritates her. It's the fact she's not getting the attention.

She wants to know where the john is.

"First door on the left."

He gets up from the chair, and you're not going

to believe this, places his head under her arm, and starts to lift her. Can you believe it? Even through all this disagreement, in which they never yelled, I might add, he's going to help her. Imagine after all those years, he might hate her, or her him, but none of the love seems gone, or the caring.

"You have to use the restroom?"

"I don't need your help. I just wanted to know where it was. I don't even have to go," she says. "Are you finished with your drink and ready?"

He sits. "Woman, you can see I'm not finished."

She's pouting again. "Are you going to leave another quarter or not?'

"How many times do I have to tell you? It's my money, and that's enough." This old man finishes his drink and helps his wife out of the chair. They walk out the door, him holding her by the arm again. Yeah, he's still helping her. Think about it. Think about this guy, married what--some sixty years, and he still holds her arm. He's helping her when she walks. After all that--the arguing and everything. Of course it never got serious. This happens right at my bar, these little petty fights, and I have a hard time keeping from laughing.

Of course I have to go home and make-up with Ashley, seeing this right in front of me, thinking about her and how I probably killed the cat. So I bring her some flowers from the grocer and apologize. You know, I'm sorry, it was a stupid fight, I love you, blah, blah, blah.

Then Ashley and I are in bed, sharing a cigarette, after the apology, and all. You know how it is. Each of us is petting a cat, because she obviously found the Siamese. But she says, and listen, this is the best part--and I'm relieved about it because I could have been sleeping in the garage with no reason to smoke a cigarette. But she tells me she turned on the dryer and heard a noise, like sneakers bouncing against the drum. And you know what she finds? Of course, she finds the cat. She can't figure out how it happened. Obviously I don't tell her, but we both get a laugh out of it.

So I tell her about the old couple and I'm starting to think it's not really that funny after all. I won't tell her my grandparents were, probably, the same way-- lovingly hateful. And I get this, because it happened--somehow, someway, I take a small step back into myself, into our lives, and I wonder, really wonder, if when I'm eighty-five, I'll go up to my wife, help her from the recliner, and say I want to live alone, away from you and the cats: these past sixty-three years have been a mistake.

Shit Fades

Michael O'Brien

Middle-aged washouts and lost young souls sip coffee and joke with waitresses in blurry all night restaurants pretending it's really where they want to be. I can't go home and there's nothing better to do, so I'm sitting here smiling, trying again on a new face--fighting against everything that feels like a waste as life fades

Remember when hope drenched and filled these nights? Like this brutal cynicism does now.

The face across from me puts her coffee cup down and lets me know she was stoned that night she talks about "highs" and "four bowls" between drags of a cigarette as I wonder why she's fallen in love with my tired eyes.

They all use so much shit to get by
maybe I should give some of it a try
anything that could save me from these sinking feelings
of waste and failure
It's OK--I'll just dry my face and remember to wake up
tomorrow careful and silent as life fades

Hippie Nirvana

Michael O'Brien

Did my eyes follow her?
and will everything else be far behind
or has someone been following her all along
leaving his quiet reminders on the way
hopeless and hacked
burned out and tired
we're all so restless
I want something to happen

maybe someone important will die
and we can all remember where we were standing
spelling out and buckling down
peace and love in your rat race
the hippies and yuppies are the same people
--20 years older

Don't undermine our losses
wrap my mouth around a dirty shotgun
this suicidal soul is still wailing in hell
his pain and desperation represent all of yesterday's
dreams that we never had
just trying to live--with or without peace and love
drowning in a hippie nirvana

Saturday Morning Reflections

Michael O'Brien

Friday night hits the lazy summer week like
a pin pierces a balloon

lonely eyes are out searching for one another
with an energy that even the securest lovers envy

hundreds of hands stamped with a number that matches
the one on their cup

four dollars buys all the beer you can drink
and a chance to end the loneliness that creeps up
Monday morning and builds until Friday night

number 7 just borrowed a cigarette from number 29--
even though she doesn't smoke

number 76 just refilled his cup thinking,
"maybe this one will wipe those big blue eyes
from my mind."

It will until he wakes up Saturday morning and smells
cigarettes on his clothes instead of her perfume

Everyone calls it a "party"
but it isn't really
no one's celebrating a birthday or anniversary

it's just a group of lonely, confused souls trying to find
something to fill that empty spot in their hearts

and just in case no one comes along,
there's enough alcohol to wash away the realization that
a hundred beautiful faces can't take the place of a special
one.

Jeremy Pautz

Take some time, consider what's going on. Sorry I can't. There's a nasty red mosterthing, clawing, sprinting on its hands and-- well, hands. It doesn't have any legs. Just a big mouth full of teeth, all yellow and pointy, a couple eyes beadylike eyes sparkling with bloodlust, and four arms of red muscle cord terminating with shiny black claws. It's springing from my imagination. Five seconds to impact.

Outside, I'd just stepped on someone's foot. She was thin and British: that turned me on. The first thing she said was, "You've stepped on my foot." It was a very fitting thing to say, as I had. That occurred at T-minus sixty-two seconds. I said "Yeah." and looked at her goofylike.

Sally field was crawling across the ceiling-- the result of a previous explosion. I had to pay the record store owner for the damages.

"Could you stop?" she asked. She had really neato eyes. They were brown-going-on-black; I looked into them and fell inside falling, falling, and laughing maniacal, the whole way. The sides were lined with tar and all that did was mess up yer hands-- you can't stop yourself when you're going that fast-- and I said, wouldja like a lemon?"

"What? Just get off my foot," she said, losing any bemusement she possessed. I saw it fly out of her left ear. Forty seven seconds to impact.

"Sure," I said and removed my foot from hers., she hadn't felt a thing painwise; her shoes were so leather-think a ballistic missile would've shrugged and looked at it's launcher, saying "What am I supposed to do with that?

"My synapses just aren't firing properly today," I admitted, and in a totally unrelated action, knocked over s stack of CDs. I knocked over the stack to endear myself and seem clumsycute. It worked she rolled her eyes and laughed. Twenty-three second to impact.

Impact: The huge red monster sprung from my head like a scene from Greek myth, and following the laws of physics, my body reeled opposite directionally. Blowing over the entire Various Artists, section, the monster scampered over the shelves, up the wall, ate

Sally Field, and exploded from severe digestion.

Eyes crazy, eyes wide, I asked her "Whatcha buyin?" She showed me at T-minus nineteen second, just as I felt my skull swelling. I looked at the CDs. Hyperjazz; some dreamy wash of distorted pop; electric fuzzy nea-psychedelia that floated like flowers in the crystal sludge: "Oh, dear."

"What?" she said. Eleven seconds.

"You might want to stand back." Then

"Why?" nine.

"Something's going to fly out of my brain any second now." Seven.

She stepped back and looked worried; she actually believed me. That's good-- when the monster flies out I'd seem open and honest. Six

"I've seen it before," she said.

"I like yer music," I say, and get read to wince. The emergence isn't painful, more of a headclearing woosh, and air circulator in my brain. Five. There's the monster, right on cue.

"Thanks," she said uneasy. Four.

"Any second now." Three. Two

"Watch out Sally!" I yell. One.

Bam.

You have been reading ,

Significant Drop

Sailing

Shawn Rapsin

Ocean current swept away,
Take me towards another day.
On the current of life I'll stand,
until my boat and feet hit land.

They'll be ups and downs I know
such great currents will ever flow.
But with my trusty ship in tow,
Let the storms rain and blow.

Across the ocean wide I'll sail
Farther then the mighty whale.
The current of life is such a feat,
However my spirit it cannot defeat.

Throwing Hearts

Shawn Rapsin

It cost too much.
It takes too much.
It'll burn your life away.
Whatever you do,
Please be true.
And throw your heart away.

Throw it in the river
Throw it down the drain
All it gives is misery,
Emptiness and pain.
Whatever you do,
Please be true.
And throw your heart away.

Give it away to charity.
Or sell it in a sale.
Feed it to the birds
Or send it in the mail.
Whatever you do.
Please be true,
and throw your heart away.

Untitled

Heather Reiter

The dim eyes sparkle,
saddened only to a smile.
Rivers of tears dry up,
Still rain falls free to me.

I can hold my hand of glory,
high above your mind,
under the spell of sorrow,
Reality's peaceful hope, finally falls.

I watch angels fly through serene darkness,
wings burnt by harsh eyes,
Hidden in the glow of my eyes,

a flame floats into their world.

Our split dreams covered in lies
unheard whispers of the unreal
lives tangled in webs
in chains of misty death.

Shadows fly under black wings,
In the breath of the night,
and they begin to turn to ash
as we come back to life.

The Dash

Lark Rains

I wrapped my coat around myself tightly as I sat on the damp grass beside the tombstone. I would have liked to zip up the zipper to keep the cold out, but I broke it last month in a hurry to get out of the door on time. That's the way I usually am, late and in a hurry. Sometimes in the few moments of stillness I enjoy with myself though I come to this quiet place and collect my thoughts. One of my favorite things to think back upon and remember is a girl my brother dated about a year ago.

I still remember my first impression I had of her when my brother brought her home one afternoon and introduced her to my mom and me. She was a red head with strong personality that wore black platform shoes. Her long eyelashes and dark green eyes made me envious of her right away, though I can't imagine why (I'm quite good looking myself.)

She stayed into the night and as I sat in my room right next to my brothers, I could hear every word they said. At first the things I was hearing suprised me. I could tell by the way she explained what she was learning in her physics class that she was very intelligent. Normally I don't listen so intently to the conversations my bother has in his room, but she was different. She didn't seem as flaky as the other girls he had brought home before. As I sat there listening I heard their conversation turn from jokes about old women in wheelchairs to deep questions about life and its meaning.

She began to come over to our house on a regular basis until a few months later she moved in with us. Now I sat in my room and listened through the wall to their conversations turn from thought provoking topics to moans of pleasure.

I found myself looking forward to going home and seeing my brother's girlfriend. She was like the big sister I never had. I loved the small things she taugh me like how to remove hair off a vacuum cleaner belt. She taugh me things my brother never had time for, such as how to get a ball point pen stain out of my favorite tee-shirt using hairspray.

One weekend she decided to take my brother and me to a state park two hours away. She told us about the beautiful trails and lovely scenery we would find. As soon as we got there we hiked up along a winding trail to a tall waterfall. The waterfall was in a small canyon with high, smooth, moss covered walls surrounding it.

The path to the top of the canyon was steep and slippery, but my brother wanted to try to climb up it, regardless of the danger. His girlfriend had previous rock climbing experience, so she took the lead. From below I stood upon a tall rock and watched them climb higher and higher through the mist.

Although she had some experience and proper shoes, her foot began to slip. It all happened so quickly, it's hard to remember all the details. All I know for certain is that her body fell down the canyon quickly into a pool of still water. As quickly as I could, I ran over the slippery rocks toward her. I could see that sever rocks had badly bruised her body, and her one smooth face was hanging onto her neck in a strange contorted angle. I quickly felt her pulse by placing my finger at the artery in her neck and found-- nothing.

Now I sit and state at her mottled grey tombstone. The wonderful craftsmanship intrigues me, and I find myself staring at it for hours sometimes. During one of those staring spells, as I say intently looking at the stone, I notice something about the dates carved into it. In beautiful roman numerals it gave the date of her birth, a dash, and the date she died. That dash though, it possessed something special. It represented everything in between birth and death.

That simple horizontal line stood for all the events of life both bad and good. It represented the year of innocent childhood, tears over a lost nickel, and sore bruised knees. It stood for the stage of life called junior high; large red pimples and tons of blue eye makeup. It stood for fun times filled with summer camp, water skiing, and first loves. That simple line was a symbol for high school; jammed lockers, and proms. College, all nighters and professors with trifocals were also a part of that life. So much meaning in such a simple line. I vowed to fill my dash with meaning.

Sad
Empty
Xpression
Lark Rains

Your words can be so beautiful
When your true feelings are expressed.
'I had so much more to say, but I forget most"
he paused.
"That's okay" she said in a quiet tone.
"I understand"
The cries - gentle tears this time
He understands - this time.
As the left tear rolls down her face
He leaned across the bed in the darkened
room,
and tenderly kissed her wet lips.
It seemed so novel,
and foreign.
A kiss of heartfelt love.
Not mechanical love making
Special
Erotic
Xcitement

Questions
Lark Rains

Sometimes I ask questions
Deeper then a canyon
Sitting on a log
Or bench
Or just my lumpy bed.

I'll sit and ponder
The whens and whys of life-
When will the wind blow?
Why don't we see his origin?

Of all the thoughtful questions
that have provoked my thoughts
There is one I think of often-
Why even ask?

Alone
Robin Sutton

Imagine being alone
you sit there
contemplating life
wonder if you can go on
What do you do
Imagine being alone
silence berating you
in every hope
ultimately it's nothing
What do you do
Imagine being alone
you miss that life before
the hated becomes the loved
oh how you want it
What do you do
You Live

The Gift
John Softcheck

Lucky? Yeah, I guess you could say I'm lucky. It really started the moment I was born. I have this really strange birth defect - Triad Syndrome. Never heard of it? I'm not surprised. Back in '73, most doctors hadn't heard of it either. It's not that they were stupid or anything; it's just really rare. Only one in like ten thousand plus kids ever get it. Of the ones who did, maybe ten percent live to see their first birthday, and only a few will ever live outside a hospital on a regular basis. Me, I've been on the outside since I was two. Oh sure, I've seen more than my share of clinics and operating rooms. I can start an IV, read an X-ray, tell you how many fish they have in the lobby, but I don't take medicines anymore. I've never been on a dialysis machine either. So yeah, I guess you could say I'm lucky.

I live in a nice suburb. My folds are cool. I own my car, got a good job at Argonne and a degree from U of I. I have a lot to be thankful for, but folks who know me well don't envy me for any of these things. They want my luck.

I don't think of it as luck, because it doesn't just happen. Someone off the street, who just met me, might say I'm lucky. They might see the car spinning out of control, miss me by a foot, and smash into the wall, and say "Damn, that's one lucky guy!" But my friends know better. They've seen me work. My dad calls it my 'power'. But I don't think of it that way either. Power makes me think of superman or something, like I have X-ray vision I could just keep using over and over.

I know it doesn't work that way because I've tried to push that luck more than once and it hasn't gone well. I like to think of it as a gift. I'm not a religious guy exactly, but I think most people would agree I'm spiritual. I don't know if this is some gift from God, or just powerful karma, or what. I Just know sometimes I can sense things. Not that I'm psychic or anything. I've never read someone's palm or seen visions in a crystal ball, though I could swear I've seen things in a dream before. I try to keep a journal now, to prove to skeptics that I'm telling the truth. Anyway, sometimes I just get a feeling, like this would be a good time to buy one of those little 'scratch-n-win tickets at the grocery store. I'll win a dollar, or five, and cash in. My family is full of gamblers: horse players, poker kings, pool sharks, all trying to make a quick buck. There's a running pool on any major sport every week at my house, with the winner getting over a hundred dollars. You'd think I'd get caught up in stuff like that, but I've never been a gambler. I don't know how it skipped me, but gambling has never had the slightest appeal to me. I don't even play the lotto; like I said, I don't abuse the gift.

I never even used it that much until the river-boats came to town. Up until then, it would be a little push, now and then, to make a coin toss go my way. I used to flip guys at my job the slow nights to see who went home early. After a while, some guys wouldn't even bother flipping, I never lost. Ever. The only time I ever lost a coin toss was to an old roommate, to see who got the biggest room. I lost and took the one down the hall. We had a four bedroom basement apartment, and it was really rainy that year. Mine turned out to be the only room that didn't flood. I guess you could say I won that one after all.

But when the river-boats came, my mother couldn't wait to take me. She like to play roulette, so she'd take me to a table and ask me which number to play. I've always had trouble with roulette. I'll get like ten numbers in my head, and can't sort them out. After a while I figured out that I was seeing the right numbers, just out of sequence, which is not much help. My real knack is slot machines.

Any hard core gambler will tell you not to play the slots, they're a rip-off. Slots are set to give you back 93% of what you put in, so you'll win now and then, but if you keep playing, you'll eventually lose it all! The trick is to go with an amount you can afford to lose. I take ten dollars. I play that ten until it's gone, and then quiet. Even if I turn that ten into fifty (I've never walked away with less then thirty) I stop. Most people think that's nuts. "You'd be playing on their money!", but it's not their money, it's my money, and I don't abuse the gift.

If I had to pick between the two casinos, I'd go with the Empress. The place has style. River-boats are river-boats as far as I'm concerned, but the palace itself has style. It looks like something out of ancient Egypt. The whole atmosphere is just too cool for Joliet. It's the kind of place you see in a Bogart movie. The first time I saw it, I thought "this is the kind of place you go to meet someone".

"Will you be dining alone tonight sir?"

"No." I remove my hat and overcoat. "I'll be meeting someone."

Corny, but I just love that stuff.

My mother likes the Empress because of all their promotions. The latest one is this big wheel. They spin it and you win whatever the ticker lands on. It could be anything from a five dollar gift certificate to a hundred bucks. Ever since that started she watches "Wheel Of Fortune" religiously. When she told me about it I figured, no way. There's always a catch, but it's true. You can only spin once a week, but it doesn't cost anything.

I was all for it until the line actually got up to my turn. I through I could spin the wheel, but they have this guy do it for you. That's when I got this sinking feeling in my gut. I can pick horses by the names, I can read a slot machine, or tell you who's gonna win the Monday night game, but I've never tried to channel the juice through someone else. I just didn't think it would work. I could feel the energy rushing through my arms and chest, tightening my neck. I felt the tension in my back and down my spine. All I could do was watch as the wheel spun., flashes of color blinking in and out. I watched the hundred dollar mark, just a little silver on a huge wheel, slowing near the ticker. I forgot all about the man who spun for me and focused on that spot. It slowed to the $5 certificate next to the $100 mark and almost stopped. I summoned up all the juice I could and pushed the wheel another inch. I heard my mother screaming a thousand miles away. The guy spinning the wheel shook my hand, and let me over to another lady who congratulated me and gave me a ticket. I walked down the ramp to the boat in a daze. I just couldn't believe it.

My mother kept shaking my arm and going on about how lucky I was. My father shook his head - He'd won $10.

The Ring

John Softcheck

Less metal than a dime,
but worth the treasury.
A band stronger than prison bars.
A contract sealed with steel
binding hearts to a life of
unfulfilled dreams and
broken promises.
The only escape, an act of betrayal
yet wearing the ring
is the betraying of your own heart
Does he love you as I do?
Does your image haunt his dreams?
Does his heart beat at your command
and swell with your smile?
Where's the chain forged that can hold the soul
since a chain is only rings?
And where is the blaze with heat enough
to match the burning of secret passion?

Charleston

John Softcheck

I throw the last quilt up to Nacke and climb back down the creaky wooden ladder. He's arranging them on the fresh hey for Rich and Nick. They lean against the gate which borders the bottom floor of the barn. The smell of pigs isn't as bad as I expected. I'll be able to sleep easily on the bed of straw we'll make when we get back. It would be really pleasant, I think, feeling the warm breeze playing through my hair, to just climb back up right now and crash. I've traveled over a thousand miles in the last three days. It took us three hours to get from Chris's house in Batavia to the Nacke farm just south of Charleston, Nick in the "Nackemobile' and Rich in my head as I pat the top of a black and white pig: "You're nuts, softy, you two are seriously demented. You're never gonna make the walk--you're too tired to stand." I wonder again why I ever agreed to this, but the Nackster jumps down next to me and gives me that big grin, the grin he gets when he's about to do something really stupid and dangerous. One of those things which we refer to as a Charleston, named after the transfer student from Easter Island I lived next door to for a semester and a half.

"Okay, let me get some flashlights and we'll go" He says, and heads off toward the farmhouse. I walk to the Ghost and throw all my valuables in the passenger's seat. Wallet (with fifty bucks generously donated by various family members during my brief stay in Joliet), ring (a gift from my father when I graduated Joliet Catholic High, almost four years ago), my favorite earring-the Batsymbol carved in silver, my stone necklace-which like my karma is black and fractured, and my battered Victorinox. I decided against leaving my glasses, since I can't find my way in the dark without them, and I want to see and remember every detail. Jeremy comes back from the house with the flashlights and something else, which I can't quiet make out even in the brightness of the moonlight. He hands me a flashlight and starts taking his apart.

"What're you doing?"

"Changing the lens, these are too bright."

"Got another one?"

"Not another red one, but you can have the blue one if you want it." He hands me that blue lens and shows me how it fits in. It takes me a minute to fix it and put it back together, but when I turn it on this time, the light is much more subdued. Just enough to see by and not enough to be noticed in the woods by a neighbor looking out their window. I look up and see Nacke backing the ATV out of the small shed next to the bard. I grab the other side and help him push it out to the path leading further back into his property.

"I thought you said we couldn't take the ATV???", I whisper so that Nick and Rich won't hear me from the loft.

"Well, what I meant was that we ALL couldn't take the ATV, and I knew if I threw in that bullshit about the thirty-five minute walk, Nick and Rich would puss out, so I wouldn't have to worry about it. Start turning right."

I turned the handlebar further right, and we pushed it a little ways behind the barn. As Jerr jumps on and gets himself settled, I hear Sam, the Nacke family dog, mulling about on the other side. Sam is short for Samantha, she's part beagle, part Dalmation, and a few other breeds. She got in a bad accident a few years back and lost her back left leg, but you'd never know it if you watched her run.

"Here, hold this." Nacke says, handing me a woodcutting ax.

"What the hell is this for?!?!"

"Protection."

"From WHAT!!!?"

"Relax, it's just in case. Now get on and don't drop it." I climbed on behind him, holding the flashlight around his waist with one arm and keeping the ax steady behind me with the other. Jerr kicks the motor over and the roar violates the stillness.

I think I was eight years old when I first saw the shelter. I was exploring the properties behind my house with Billy White. We were on Quinine's property. Quinine is a professor of English at Easter, and he lives back there with his wife. They're a couple of nature freaks; hippies who got trapped in the sixties. They just hang out back there drinking and smoking dope, and they run around naked in the summer and just live off the land most of the time. They don't have an actual house, but they build this shelter into the side of a ravine. It has windows and a timber frame for a room. I think they even had goats running wild out there, and a couple of huts where they stored their food and their bicycles and stuff. It was really a cool place, really earthy, but clean and nice.

We're speeding through the field behind his property now. Nacke turns on the floodlight and I can see the forest's edge rushing up to meet us. There's a big piece of farm machinery just sitting out there. IT looks like a reject from a B-scifi movie. Jerr cuts around it, oblivious to Sam the three-legged dog, and hanks the bulky ATV to a quick stop. The ground ahead of us slopes down like a miniature valley. I've never rode of these before, but it looks way too steep.

"Do we walk from here?"

"Nah, we can ride it down, just hang on."

I crouch down behind him and grip the ac as best I can with my free hand. "Shit, Jerr, we're gonna flip!!!"

"Ah, don't worry, Softy,...this is cake compared to what's up ahead!"

I try to take comfort from that, but can't help wish he'd told be about this part before we started going down it. To my amazement we reach the bottom safely, and find ourselves on the bank of a rocky creek. The water is low enough to cross, but the ATV stalls when it hits the other side.

"We have to turn back man, this little guy can't make the climb."

"OK, just let me back it up a sec, I got another idea" He turns to the left and rides two wheels in the bank, and the other two in the creek. As we follow the creek the bank starts to rise, tipping the ATV at an increasing angle, until I'm almost certain my leg is about to be crushed underneath when we topple sideways. At the last second he finds a low spot in the bank, and uses the momentum we've built up to pop onto the other side. We cross over some brush and a few more creeks before he finally stops again. The motor roars on as he turns back with solemn eyes and the slightest hint of that grin. "OK, this is where it gets a little hairy." Just ahead of us is a hill. A huge hill, and a steep hill. From here it looks like a mountain. If we flip here the ATV and Jerr will land on top of me.

"Charleston, you've got to be kidding. There's no way we can make it up that."

"No, we can make it. Just get as far forward as you can and hang on. He had stoped a few feet from the bottom of the hill to gain some more momentum, and I can feel my nuts shrivel up as he guns the motor. The ride is so quick the little machine doesn't have time to slip, but I can feel the ground start to give under our weight. As we reach the top, the ground on both sides of us rapidly drops off. We're on a thin plateau with large trees scattered thinly all around. Nacke weaves between the larger trees, knowing over some smaller ones and pushing low braches out of his face as we go. Sometimes the branches are too thin and we have to bend and duck around the. He slows down suddenly and I can see his head turning looking for something. A moment later he stops altoghether and hops off. "This is it," he announces, "The edge of our property." He walks over to the fence, a wire held up by sticks every few feet, and explains to me how to use the thumb throttle. As he wrestles with the stake, I have my first real chance to consider how stupid and dangerous this really is.

"Hey Jerr, would this guy have a shotgun or something? I mean if we get caught on his propery, is he nutty enough to shoot us?"

He pulls the fence down by the stake (later I learned the fence is electrified) and I drive over it. When I'm nearly on the other side he shrugs and answers "Probably" He takes a moment to reset the fence and hops on.

I think about that. I've never been shot before. I doubt I'd ever want to try it just for the experience, but here I am. I'm toooling around the forest with one of the biggest fools I've ever met, for no reason other than it's cool . I guess if I have to die someday, this would be a pretty cool exit, so what the hell?

"Oh, well. I didn't really want to live past graduation anyway. Besides, I hear it's overrated".

As we approach the farm house, I lean over and whisper to Jerr "We have to come up with a story. In case we get caught." But he looks at me as if to say:

What story? The two of us, the dog, flashlights, and ATV, and an axe on his propert at two-thirty in the morning. He's right. What possible story could we come up with? Finally the dog quiets down and I can feel the backs of my knees starting to tire from crouching for so long. We wait another minute, and still no sound from the dog or sight of it's owner.

"Okay," he whispers, "I'm gonna go." I hold Sam so that she won't make any noise. IT's hard. I have to really grab her tightly to keep her from following him. He makes it three-quarters of the way when the dog starts up again. Sam hasn't made a sound, so I know the dog would have heard us anyway. I sit tight with Sam and watch the farmhous. Herr has the Chevy to hide him now, but Sam and I are still out in the open. I know the owner will come out soon, this dog has been barking off and on for way too long not to attract attention. If he walks out he's going to see me and I'm going to get shot and I'm going to die. I want to take off my glasses in case ther're catching a reflection from the houseligths, but I'm too scared I won't be able to see. Herr is still back by the Chevy, and I think he's motioning me to get moving, so I half-stand and start moving toward him. Sam is trotting along in front of me, not making any noise. I meet up with Jerr behind the Chevy and breathe a slight sigh. Now if we hear someone, we can just duck behind it, and they'll never see us. We're moving toward a tree I couldn't see before, narer the woods, when I hear the dog's barking getting louder. I look back and see a huge collie darting across the field at breakneck speed, coming strainght for us. There's no way we can outrun it.

Jeremy sees it too because he grabs my arm and whispers "Oh, fuck, don't fucking move." We stand still and I'm not sure of ether to be more scared of this dog, or the man who owns it. Jeremy doesn't move. I don't move. The dog doesn't move. Sam trots around behind it, sniffing the ground. It looks from us to Sam and back at us again, I think, deciding whether to eat us or invesitgage her. HE decieds she's the more intersting of the two choices, and trots off in her direction.

"Look, Nack, I was with you all the way up until now, but this just isn't fucking worth it. Let's get the hell outa here." We're only yards way from the line of trees, but I feel like someone just gave me a second shot at life, and I'm not going to waste it.

"...Yeah, yeah, okay." he says skiwky. "Let's go back this way." He leads me back toward the nearer house, and when we get to their woodpile we start to walk a little faster. Herr looks back over his shoulder and stops, whispering "Okay, we're cool. I don't think that dog's going to bother us now." He points in the direction of the nearer house, "See there's no one in this house now, so we're okay."

"Shit! You could have told me that before, I thought someone would see us from there for sure!" We walk on in silence for a moment, thankful to be alive and in one piece. We were close, man, Really close. A few feet and we'd have been in the woods."

"Yeah," he shakes his head and slings the ax. "I've never been able to figure out what to do about that dog."

"You mean you knew that dog was there all along?!? Why the fuck didn't you tell me before?!?!"

"I don't know, it just didn't seem important... Man, that really could've sucked. I couldn've got shot!"

"You!?! Hey genius, I couldn't got shot!!!"

"If we go back, that dog is sure to start up again"

"Yeah" he says, but I know he's thinking it over because I am too. He looks back into the forest and points. "Hey, is that a light?"

I look to where he's pointing. It's partially obscured by some trees, but I can see fairly well, "Yeah, looks like it."

"Was it on when we came?"

"I don't remember, I wasn't really paying attention."

He's in his element now. His voice is more powerful than I've ever heard it before. "We are getting the fuck out of here NOW!!!!"

We have to rock the ATV a bit to get it back down to neutral, and Jerr jump-starts it. He drives it to the road and turns the light back on. When we hit the road it really starts to pour, and I have to shout over the sound of the wind and the motor. "Why couldn't we have just taken the road out here?"

"Because, if we had the neighbors would have had time to call the cops" he shouts back, nodding his head at a house as we pass it. "But we can be back and in the barn before the cops get out here."

Minutes later, the ATV safely parked under the shed, we throw another quilt on the hay next to Rich and Nick. I pull off my shoes and listen to the rain hitting the roof. The pigs snore. I hear Nacke breathing next to me.

"Jerr?"

"Yeah Softy?"

"Tell me the truth. Did you think we were gonna eat it right there?"

"Yes, Softy, I did"

"Me too." I couldn't sleep for hours.

How do you know it's still there?

I just do. Trust me, I know. I know it too.
Nacke didn't tell us about the huge black snake that lived in the loft until the next morning.

V Chip
Ted Thompson

Vinnie the vidiot
Vassal of the valley
Of vacuous vaginas,
Vested his
Venal vitality
In viscose visions
Of vitreous virgins
In volcanic vortices
Of vampishness

And Oh what a
Vas deferens

The Little Mags: Artily Obtuse Obelisks of Marble Metaphor
Ted Thompson

Presently printable poetry
Must sound
In staccato burps
Images
In wampum strings
The beady
Shells of poems
Profound
To prideful maker
But no chambered nautilus,
Just a flotsam of phrases
To readers
Still betting
On the ace of meaning
In poetry's incessant
Three card monte.

The Three R's
Ted Thompson

The point of reading
Is not to mirror self
But find instead
The dangerous, alien
Thoughts.
If not forced to grapple
With the demon-
The phantom of intent
That bars the board-
We find no piquant sauce
Worthy the devouring.
And leave the banquet
Still hungering.

Lit 101
Ted Thompson

The classroom
Is a "clean, well-lighted place"
Where youth
Stacks its aspiration saucers
Unmindful of
The dusty street outside.
And I'm the older
Waiter
Willing to stay
Against the
Coming darkness.

The Pilot
Carla Taylor

The take off was perfect.
I settled back, nervousness eased, to wonder.
Wonder at the awesome view around me,
below me.
And the person to my left.

I remember the day they pulled you out of me.
A son - so dependent on me for life.
How did we get here, rolls reversed so
quickly?
My life now depends on your skills
and I know full well
of your difficulties
keeping your car on the road.

Let us pray...that the skies are safer.

You turn and smile and tell me that
you'll take me anywhere I want to go
The sun is setting, the sky perfectly clear.
Lights have come on in the city below
making a criss--cross pattren of stars
the beauty is overwhelming

But there is a catch to this ride
the pilot wants to show me what he can do
I say no, but I'm not the pilot.

The were called "wingovers."
(Oh my God, where's the horizon?)
The experience reminds me of my friends
description of some people:

"Religious to the throw-up kind."

Drawing Life
Carla Taylor

Sometimes I have to
Squint to see what's really
Valuable. The darks and
Lights become obvious with the petty details
obscured.
That's a trick of the trade in drawing

But does it work in life?

Sometimes I have to
close my eyes
to really see.

Untitled
Tom Torkelson

See slumped shoulders
speak, symbolically of human helplessness

Alone, without help,
we achieve grief and hell

Still we try, as we die
such slow, such low
such terrible deaths

Plodding on
with pride our legacy
and vanity our grave

The hope of a better life
surely many hold
But life goes on, we fax and fuss
the rush to see, the urge to surge

And in our haste
and through the waste
the cry of our soul
is never heard

Answer me this and you will find
the cause of ill to all mankind:
Why is it thought to rest in peace,divine,
but to live in peace, absurd?

Locked In
Tom Torkelson

They are here for a time
(prisoners or participants?)
Some to learn some to be baby sat
A girl praises her dead guitar idol
A boy (pretending to be a man)
plays a part in a play only he understands

How much truth
How much hurt
Is buried beneath their laughter
Dear God, please help them
Because sometimes it seems you're
the only one who cares
who loves
who watches over
these searching, hurting blind souls
...like mine.

Calla Lillies
Gale Tolf

Abstaining from liquor on a dry drunk
Lacking vitality, life and spunk
A zombie locked in a job I abhorred
My outlet for creativity a chore
Nightly grinding paintings of flowered organisms
Intellectual exercises of color, form and rhythm
Gregarious attempts greeted with hate
Locked in my studio by an artist's fate
A series exploring repetition
In which I had no conviction
Paintings created to escape death's knell

Ironically the only paintings that sell
An intellectual exercise that fascinated me
Devoid of life, divorced from humanity

Cat at a Shelter
Francine Tolf

Your fear is palpable--
a ball wound tight with terror
that trembles
when my hand, too loudly, clangs open your
cage door,
reaches towards your matted fur to touch--
Shivering, you back away even further,
hug yourself even smaller,
eyes dark and huge,
never leaving my mind for a second.
Now I wish there were a language of
gentleness
among creatures
that you could easily understand!
How I wish my eyes could translate the
yearning to help you
as yours do, to me, the gentleness
that terrifying streets
and frostbitten nights
could not destroy.
How I wish
you could relax your tense little body
and let me stroke you, talking tenderly,
till your eyes half-closed
and purring, swelled in your throat
the way light
fills a hungry soul.

Time Cures
Unknown Author

I woke up this morning
and something seemed strange,
All those feelings I had before
somehow seemed to change
I looked into the mirror
and to his suprise,
there weren't any tears
trickling from my eyes.
All those other times
I stood in that place
trying with all my heart
to put a smile on my face.
A day long awaited
I thought would never arrive,
How everynight I prayed
my poor heart would survive.
So now, as I stand here
looking in the glass,
Tears don't invade my eyes
when thinking of the past.
The future is mine
I'll find another dream,
Though you think I love you
your thoughts aren't what they seem.

Evening Dancer
Christi L.N. Ward

The evening dancer
Breathes in the night
blowing stardust
glimmering light

Footsteps prancing
upon the stars
brushing Venus
leaping to Mars
Jupiter's moon
upon her fingertips
red sun fire
colors her lips

Waltzing around
the sky with grace
Evening dancer
draped in lace

Crack Baby

Christi L.N. Ward

Unto the world a baby was born
never to learn of love

Only to feel the shakes of withdrawal
pangs of hunger and thirst

Left alone in a can to die
Still wet with blood from birth

Choking upon the water

from the womb without concern

Finger tips and tiny toes
with frostbite setting in

Straining cries left unheard
bounce off the frozen tin

Fading eyes begin to close
pouting mouth agape

No more need to feel the cold
The blanket of death has come.

Insomnia

Christi L.N. Ward

Haven't slept much
gotta tonight
Hard to look
into the night

Feelin' low
feelin' weak
Cluttered mind
sleep I seek

Too much shit
on my mind
Peace is what
I can't find

Fallin' down
as I walk
Make no sense
when I talk

Need my pills
just a few
Lost my stash
and my view

Crisscross Jesus

Tairi Wetzel

Crisskross Jesus
Staring down at his moccasins, wiggles his mangy toes encrusted with dirt, hasn't got put a peso, but he's rich as a king.

Crisskross Jesus
Looking in a puddle, smoothes his greasy hair, black toothless smile winking back at him. He's handsome as a movie star, just no one knows it yet.

Crisskross Jesus
Dripping tears for poverty's children, with skeleton fingers gives his last crumbs to a starving dog, got a heart as big as the ocean
and a secret as small as acceptance

Love

Tairi Wetzel

Even unmasked you still do not see me, turn my feeling into lies, throw my affection on the floor, don't want another because my heart beats openly in your hands.

You turn your face from my pulsating soul, choose to understand what you do not see or hear,

choose to ignore the window in my eyes

Darken my beauty, dirty my sex, crucify the laughter thrown down to the dogs. They will lap it up because they are not tainted as the wind that has blown through your ears. Nail yourself to the cross upon your horse of white pity, close your mind to the light and dwell with the demons, embrace antiquity which shelters the truth.

Soft little petal waiting to blossom, hard pointed thorn, waiting to bleed.

Two "Found" Poems

Bill Yarrow

1. Something Max Beckmann Said

The stronger my determination grows
to grasp the unutterable things of this world,

the deeper and more profound
the emotion burning inside me about our existence,

the tighter I keep my mouth shut
and the harder I try to capture

the terrible thrilling monster
of life's vitality.

2. Postscript to a Letter by Gustave Flaubert

O, may I be suffused
with all the energies of nature I have inhaled,
and may the breathe forth
in my book!
Powers of artistic emotion, come to my aid!
Help me resurrect the past!
Beauty must guide my pen,
but all must be living and true!
Have pity on my purpose,
oh God of all souls!
Give me Strength
---and Hope!

Wordeater 93

Student Advisors: Nicolle Byrnside, Jeff Hicks,

Amy Lingafelter.

Alumni Awards:Judy Bond, Amy Lingafelter

Marisa MellInger, Carla Taylor

Faculty Awards: Willam Fabrycki, Ted Thompson,

Bill Yarrow

Cover Designs Award- $20- Michael Fletcher

Prose Awards-$5 - Rob Defranco, Claudia Gates, Cheryl Kraus

Mike O'Brien, John Softcheck.

Poetry Awards-$5- Chrissy Dunn, Jennifer Chubb,

Mark Davenport, Ralf Mlaska, Mike O'Brien

John Stobart alone is resposable

for the awards.

Deadline for '95- September 20

Deadline for 96'- November 22

HE